



W.A.FRASER




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THIRTEEN MEN



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THIRTEEN MEN

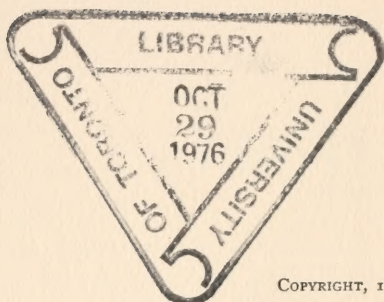
BY

W. A. FRASER



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THE TURBULENTS

THIS story has to do with the period of time in which Swampy, the raccoon, associated with some lumbermen in Cameron's shanty in the thick Canadian woods.

The toilers slew the oak and chestnut giants of the forest, in the matter of daily bread; danced at some farmhouse out in the Scotch Block; toyed with immature corn whisky at Rodney; or coon-hunted in their own forest at night, in the way of relaxation. And, in addition to all this, there was the ever-present feud with the "river boys."

The McRaes, the Campbells, the Grahams, interminable of relationship, living along the Thames River, held the men of the Scotch Block—the McPhails, the McIntyres, and Camerons—as enemies to be thrashed at times, and reviled always. These martial sentiments were reciprocally entertained by the Cameron adherents. A pretty face at a dance, with a little misunderstanding over an engagement for a Scotch reel,

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and a McRae and a McPhail would be at each other's throats out in the chip yard before you could say "Great Wallace!"

But a sore irritant was the matter of coon dogs. Jack McRae's boast was that his dog Watch could tree a coon quicker'n anything that wore hair, would stay with him till the cows came home, and could lick his own weight in swamp coons or wild-cats. He had enlarged on this boast by adding that he had the best coon dog in the county of Elgin, and that Cameron's Queenie didn't know a coon scent from the odor of a wild onion.

It was a primeval condition of life, its atmosphere surcharged with toil and strife and religion and coon-hunting.

Swampy's advent, though dramatic enough, was uneventful compared with his exit.

His mother, a true swamp coon, long of limb, black-haired on the back, and stout of heart, hibernating through the long winter in the hollow limb of a black-ash tree, came by the way of a family in the month of April. Half a month later, the Cameron men felled her lofty home for lumber; mother coon, darting from her front door, was set upon by Queenie and was slain.

The fall of the ash had killed all the youngsters but one, and the foreman, McIntyre, put

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the orphaned little creature in the bosom of his flannel shirt, and carried it to the log shanty. That was in the evening, and the whole camp entered seriously into the consideration of how the little chap's life was to be saved.

A plump, gray, fluffy ball, with an extremely attenuated nose, the coon babe slept in a little box filled with cotton batting behind the cook stove, totally oblivious of the grave question he had raised by his unwilling advent.

It was Ben Locke who hit upon the brilliant idea that proved so satisfactory at first and so productive of disorder later on. "Try him with Queenie," Locke suggested; "she might take to him in place of one of her pups. I believe she's lonesome with only Bruce."

Queenie was a half-bred collie, and, as such, great in motherly instinct, and jealous to a degree. Her brown eyes searched Locke's face understandingly as, with forefinger extended warningly, he commanded her: "Down, Queenie! Now, now—that's a good dog—that's a good dog!" This while McIntyre held the little orphan to the mother-fount of nourishment.

There is no doubt that Swampy's methods differed from the collie pup's, for Queenie curled her lips in a snarl that showed her white teeth,

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and growled her disapproval. But Swampy made good use of his time; and presently, his little stomach round and taut like a toy drum, he was put back in his box and presented in this shape to Queenie for inspection.

No one ever knew how it happened, but in the morning Swampy was found sleeping with the collie pup at the mother's side. After that he was made free of the collie's bed, and made foster brother to Bruce, the pup.

He washed his food in a little wooden trough before he ate it, and poked his thin, inquisitive nose into cupboards, boxes, and every nook of the log shanty. From a long line of swamp-dwelling, night-prowling ancestry had come to him an inherited sensitiveness of touch. His slim, black-skinned fore paws were like another pair of eyes; he appeared to be always feeling for treasure. Sometimes, half-angered by Bruce's foolishness of puppyhood, his sharp claws cut little lines of remonstrance in the youthful collie's face. The thin parchment ears of Swampy were slit into ribbons by the fishlike teeth of his dog foster brother. Thus the three played together, and ate together, with as much amity, relieved by occasional family jars, as though they were all dogs or all raccoons.

When Swampy was a little over a year old,

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one night the tremulous whistle of his own kind sang in his slit ears from a tree in the forest and something that he had forgotten all about came to him with compelling force. He had lain there the child of a collie mother, and in a minute a dozen whimpering notes of call reincarnated him and he was a coon. Inherited visions of a black-ash swamp in which he might puddle all through the hours of darkness for frogs and snails and things delicious to a coon's palate flashed through his mind.

He stole softly from the little box that was his home, raised his gray, black-barred muzzle, sniffed inquiringly toward the forest, and then slipped like a noiseless shadow across the clearing and was swallowed up in the gloomed bush.

Men came and went from the Cameron lumbering gang, and their passing was of transient regret; but Swampy's defection laid melancholy upon the whole camp. The men said he would come back again, but he did not.

One moon from the passing of Swampy—it was a September night—Locke and McIntyre, taking the dogs and their axes, made their way along three miles of bush road to a little clearing in the woods. This field was planted in corn, and, as Locke said, every coon in the bush knew it.

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Eager in the hunt, having knowledge of its method, the dogs slipped silently through a fence; their masters perched on its topmost rail and listened to the whispering corn leaves as the dogs, panting in blood lust, chased through the rustling stalks, up and down the dwarf avenues of the miniature forest. A misty moon peeped over a somber tree wall into the little clearing, turning to jewels the dewdrops held in the silver feathers that were the tassels of the corn.

Nose to ground, Queenie raced; at her heels the pup. When Bruce sought to forge ahead, the mother lunged at him with her teeth, adding a yelp of admonition. She knew that even then, perhaps, the one they sought was safe settled in a tree; but if she clung close to the trail they would come to his hiding place, and then her partners in crime, the humans, would bring him to earth for a grapple.

At first above the whispering of the shadowy corn came little whines of anxiety, as though Queenie asked: "Where is he—where is he?" Then there was a short yelp of delight.

"Found! There's one there!" Locke muttered, touching his companion's arm.

Presently, as the scent freshened, shorter and sharper came the "*Yeh-yeh!*" and then, from a half-burned fallow beyond, with its blackened

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stumps and charred logs, Queenie's voice came back, tingling the night air with a joyous "*Yi-ih-ih, yeh!*"

The men slipped from the fence, dashed through the cornfield, sprawled through the labyrinth of burned logs, into the woods on the farther side, over a sandy knoll clothed with beech and maple, and down into a black-ash swamp, where the ringing bark of dogs told they had treed a coon.

"Halloo!" ejaculated Locke, as they came to the scene of turmoil, "darned if there ain't another dog! Where in thunder—? Hanged if it ain't McRae's!"

"We're here first, whatever," McIntyre answered. "We'll make a fire, so we can see to chop."

The swamp was dry from the summer drought, and while the men gathered sticks and built a fire, Queenie sat on her haunches, her nose pointed at the stars, and her red-brown eyes fixed wistfully on something very like a fur muff high up in the ash. Bruce and the McRae dog were tearing about the tree, jumping against its smooth-barked trunk, and causing the forest to echo with their clamor.

"We can throw her into that openin'," Locke said, as he squinted up the tree; "let's hurry."

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Them McRae boys'll be sneakin' in, an' claimin' their cur treed the coon."

As the axes rang sharp and clear against the ash three men slipped into the firelight and a voice said: "Hey there, you fellers, what're you doin'?"

Locke grounded his ax and, leaning on the handle, retorted sarcastically: "Shavin' myself. What'd you think I was doin'?"

"Looks like you was choppin' down 'nother man's coon."

"Not on your broadax, Jack McRae. Our dogs druv the coon out of Gillis's corn, an' treed him; an' as we sort o' happened along 'bout that time, we kinder surmised 'twouldn't be a bad idee to chop him down."

"Us boys's got that job in hand, Ben Locke."

"We're first, which is nine points of the law."

"I'm thinkin' you've got two points, an' we've three," McRae rejoined menacingly.

"Look here, Jack McRae," broke in McIntyre, "that's too strong. We're not out for trouble, but we'll chop this coon down, whatever."

"If you're a better man nor me, you're meanin', Dan McIntyre, by God!" and the speaker slipped off his coat and rolled up his sleeves.

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"Don't swear at me, McRae; I'm no a horse. I'll take that from no man."

Locke interposed. "What's the use of you river boys lookin' for trouble. You know just as well as I do, Jack, you'd have more'n your hands full with Dan. Let the fightin' go till the fall fair at Wallacetown; there'll be plenty of it then. We come out for coons, an' so did you."

"Yes, but you're comin' by the coon, Ben, which makes a grand difference."

"Well, I'll tell you what we'll do, an' if that don't go, an' you shove the quarrel home, me an' Dan'll take you McRae boys on, and Archie Campbell can see fair play."

"Well, spit it out of you, Locke."

"We was here first, an' oughter have first go. Me an' Dan'll fall the tree, you keep your dog back, an' if ourn don't get the coon, he's yourn."

"You're meanin', Locke, you'll give us a smell o' the herrin'. It's no a fair shake," objected McRae.

"It's dead on the square," Locke retorted. "It's a pretty thick bush here in the swamp, an' most like the ash'll lodge, then the coon'll skip into that elm—perhaps he'll do it soon's the ash starts to go; from the run he give our dogs he's cunnin' enough for anythin'. Anyway, 'tain't

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no use good men fightin' over a pelt that ain't worth more'n a dollar. We're two to three, but we ain't goin' to take no back water."

The McRaes and Campbell stepped to one side and debated the question; the well-known fighting ability of "Strong Dan" McIntyre having something of a mollifying influence upon their spirits.

Jack McRae came forward presently and said: "We'll agree to that, only we'll draw lots for first try at the coon."

"All right, boys," Locke acquiesced; "we'd rather do anythin' than fight, wouldn't we, Dan?" There was a deprecating pleasantry in his voice which amounted to a sneer.

Then he broke two twigs, placed them between his fingers, and held his hand up to McRae, saying, "Draw, Jack; long stick wins."

The other drew; and Locke, throwing the remaining twig in the fire with an angry jerk, growled: "You win; go ahead."

While the Cameron men sat holding their dogs, the others sank eager axes into the soft flesh of the black ash.

Soon a shivering moan went up from the tree; its top trembled and swayed; as Jack McRae drove the blade of his ax to its eye there was a crackling scream of dissolution; the ash reeled

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drunkenly for a second, and then swept downward. Halfway in its fall to earth a strong limb caught in the elm and the tree hung suspended. With a powerful stroke the axman knocked the butt from its holding stump, the tree rolled and, with a swishing sigh, fell to its side.

The McRae dog dashed into the many-limbed top in a fruitless search; for the raccoon, running blithely along a limb while the tree swayed in mid-air, had jumped into a slender tamarack and clambered nimbly to its top.

The two men waited till the McRaes came back to the fire, their faces sullen with anger. Then Locke stepped over to the tamarack and ran his eye up its length, which was like the tapering spar of a yacht.

"The coon's up there right enough," he said, "an' there ain't no use fallin' this saplin'; it'd never come down—it'd lodge sure."

He sat down and pulled off his boots, saying: "I'll shinny up an' shake him down. You watch the dogs, Dan."

Locke had been a sailor on the Great Lakes and with arm and knee he worked up the tamarack like a boy. As he approached, the much-hunted one moved from the crotch in which he had huddled and crept cautiously along a slender limb, where he hung by his long, sharp claws.

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"Look out below!" Locke cried, standing in the crotch; then he struck the limb a sharp blow with the sole of his foot. The coon, dislodged, drew in a great lungful of air, till he was blown out like a football, and fell lightly to earth.

With a rush Queenie and Bruce were upon him; and then, even as they stuck their noses into his fat stomach as he lay on his back ready to battle, the two dogs sheathed their teeth and, drawing back a little, sniffed in a puzzled manner at the quarry. And through the sensitive nostrils of the collie mother vibrated the faint scent that reawakened a memory almost obliterated; it was the scent that once had stood for one of her own children. She gave a whine of delight; pleading, eager it was, and with her paw she scratched coaxingly at the coon's neck.

The foster mother had come by the truth; it was Swampy, the escaped one.

But with him, a half-generation reclaimed from the forest life, memory was shorter; he had lapsed rapidly to the primal savagery of his race. His white teeth gleamed for an instant in the firelight and then were buried in the paw that was the transmitter of mother affection.

With a yelp of pain, even of indignant remonstrance, the collie sprang back, and Swampy, rolling leisurely to his feet, scuttled back to the

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tamarack and, quite regardless of the fact that his man-enemy was up aloft, prepared to climb beyond reach of the meddlesome dogs.

The men sitting below had watched with astonishment this curious little pantomime, all but McIntyre; to him had come the thought that the coon must be the escaped Swampy: the dogs would have torn to ribbons any other.

When Swampy laid unfilial teeth upon the paw of Queenie and she shrank back, Jim McRae said, and his voice was keyed high in a sneer: "Blamed if the dogs ain't feared o' coon! Yon's a good coon dog you've got, Dan McIntyre." Then he gave an irritating laugh of derision.

Just as Swampy reached the tree, Campbell took his hand from the collar of the McRae dog, and the latter, darting forward with a snarl in his throat, pounced upon the escaping coon.

Then Swampy's foster mother Queenie and his foster brother Bruce sank teeth of remonstrance into the rash McRae dog, and sought to tear him limb from limb.

With an oath, Jack McRae sprang forward and kicked Queenie in the ribs. And even as he kicked, something like the paw of a bear smote him in the neck, to the end that he went headlong over the dogs. Then the other McRae and Campbell fell upon the smiter, "Strong

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Dan," and sought to batter him in the way of reproval.

The din of battle came to Locke's ears, and his breeches screeched and fairly smoked with the friction of his descent as he shot down the scale-barked tamarack. It was a time for rapid descent: he was needed. Strong Dan was surely being dragged to earth when his companion, crouching, after the manner of sailors in a fight, made entry to the festive scene.

"You would—blank you!—Huh!" That was a grunt at the butt end of a blow, as Locke's fist swung inward on Campbell's chin and dropped him to his knees. Before Locke could recoil to guard, Jim McRae's long arm flopped around like the loose end of a flail, and the Scotchman's fist, as hard as a horse's hoof from rough toil, smashed like a brick into the sailor's face.

It was a joyous mill, flagging not for the new-fangled innovation of rounds. It was one long continuous swirling round, full of action, good old-time rough-and-tumble rules governing the contest.

Locke was a master in the sailor's fighting art, which is a method of fair execution; and McIntyre's strength, known throughout the county, was as hurtful as a bear's. On the other side

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there were three of the river boys: the McRaes, long of limb, clean of wind, like cats on their feet—proper woodsmen; while Campbell, though short of stature, had been nicknamed “Fighting Archie.” Hate and clan rivalry set a fast pace, and the combatants’ diligent method would soon bring a verdict for one side or the other.

Meanwhile the cause of the little unpleasantness had scuttled up the tamarack once more, where he sat blinking curiously at the extraordinary animals who shattered the peace of the forest below. Because of the preoccupation of their masters, the dogs carried on their engagement, until Watch, outnumbered and sorely bitten, curled his tail between his legs and took to the darkened bush with howls of disgust.

The uneven ground, the big roots of the elm, and the slippery moss-covered sticks, introduced a rare element of chance into the contest. Sometimes “Strong Dan” was on his back with two men atop, until Locke, throttling one of them, would slip and all hands go rolling over one another like pups at play. It was like a football scrimmage; in the faulty, glimmering firelight a hard-knuckled fist, missing its mark, would land on the nose of a friend.

The Marquis of Queensbury and his rules had

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never puzzled the minds of these busy Scotchmen. It was go-as-you-please, kick and slug and clinch in that ring, which was the whole black-ash swamp. Rough-and-tumble bars nothing but the gouge and the bite; and, so far, the combatants adhered closely to these honorable rules. It was a scrap of fervor, fast and furious; at times a little breathing spell coming in a clinch. They were almost too busy for speech. Once McIntyre grunted: "Take that, McRae, blank you!" as his Scotch knuckles, high in bone, ripped like a saw at his opponent's eyebrow. And Jack retaliated with a kick that would have opened an oak door.

Locke, less economical of speech than the Scots, encouraged his fighting comrade from time to time. "Give it—to him—Dan! I'm at your—back." And he was. But, unfortunately for his powers of succor, he was surrounded himself. Three men can deploy in battle more promiscuously than two; so there was always a spare fist ready to prod either Dan or Ben just as he was getting the better of his opponent.

Locke's face was redder than the rose, and the crimson hue had smeared his shirt front; he peered with difficulty from beneath a beehive, or something, that hung heavily over his left eye. Three times Campbell had been knocked as

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many feet; but he was a wasp, a terrier that came snarling back to meddle officiously with four good men who desired to settle, in their own way, a difference of opinion.

Once the two McRaes held McIntyre in their long arms until he was like a figure of the Laocoon. Jack's left had Dan's head in chancery, while with his right he upper-cut, only to batter his knuckles against the McIntyre skull.

"Will you take water now, blank you?" McRae panted.

For answer Strong Dan buckled his hips side-wise and with a feint of throwing his opponent backward, gave him the rolling-hip lock, and McRae turned in the air, falling on his back heavily. That would have settled it if it had not been for the spare man. Before McIntyre could recover from the throw he was back-heeled by the brother and brought down, with a McRae atop.

Locke, jumping back from a swing of Campbell's fist, found time for an impromptu kick at Jim McRae's ribs; and at the same minute McIntyre turned his man beneath.

Jack was up again, and, first pivoting a blow into the base of Locke's skull by way of assistance to Campbell, reached down and clutched at McIntyre's throat with his long fingers for a

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strangle-hold. Then he pitched forward at a blow from Locke, and the three—the two McRaes and McIntyre—rolled over and over in a ground-tussle. Suddenly Jim McRae's hand, clutching treacherously at his enemy's face, found an opening, and two fingers slipped into his mouth, fastening upon the cheek in a gouge-hold.

Just as Locke had landed a subduing blow over Campbell's heart he heard a half-smothered cry of "Gouge!" from his comrade. The flickering firelight fell red upon the polished steel of an ax almost at Locke's feet. With an oath the sailor swung it over his head, and, springing to the struggling group, cried: "Let him up, you dogs, or I'll split your heads open! I'll smash you like a rat for gouging—you cowardly Indians!"

Locke's address was short and very much to the point; even the advantage of a gouge-hold sank into insignificance compared with the advantage a man held standing above them, ax in hand. With a growl Jack McRae rose to his feet, while the fingers of Jim uncurled from their vise-like grip.

With a twist Dan turned the McRae under and sprang to his feet, saying: "Get up now, you dirty dog, whatever! Stand by, Ben, to see

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fair play, an' I'll lick the two of them. Fight-in' river boys—gougers!"

It was a fine point, this discriminating between the kick and the gouge; but the latter was well over the line into the illegitimate.

"Never mind, Dan," Locke expostulated; "we gave them more'n they sent—they got their bellyful of fight this time. We don't scrap with old women that scratch."

McIntyre was of the patient, quiet kind usually, and, as is the manner of that tribe, when his blood was up, was hard to subdue.

"I'll tell you this whatever, Jack McRae," he said angrily, "I'll give you a thrashin' for this night's work yet. You've boasted from Rodney to the town line that you could best any man in the Scotch Block, an' I'll make you eat your words. An' forbye you're doubtin' what I'm sayin', just step out here an' fight like a man."

"You'll get your chance, McIntyre," McRae retorted, "where there'll not be cowards swingin' axes."

This exchange of compliments was good, in a way, for the respite from action allowed the heated blood to cool. And as for fighting, it would have been a greedy man who would have clamored for more than had been served out in

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the ash swamp. McIntyre's face bore eloquent testimony to the excellence of the entertainment, and the McRaes were battle-scarred to a high degree.

As the two parties gathered their axes and prepared to depart, McIntyre spoke again: "I'll tell you, Jack McRae, why Queenie didn't tackle the coon, fearin' ye'll spread it from the town line to the lake that she's no a good coon dog: yon coon is Swampy, that she raised as one of her own pups; and that's why she'd no put a tooth in him. And now, Locke, do you away up the tamarack again and bring Swampy down in your arms this time. We'll take him back to the shanty."

THE OFFCASTING OF NICHEMOUS

IN the first place, Lieut. Hugh Royd became of interest, as far as this story is concerned, in Rangoon. That was long enough ago, even before the time King Thebaw had been taken by his royal neck and led out of the country by the British Raj.—thirty-one years.

Nobody ever quite knew why he *apsied* out of the regiment, which is a Hindoostanee word describing a man's voluntary departure. He had worked like a Trojan to get his commission as a Sub, and fought like a hero to exchange that for something higher; and then in a single night he shed all the glorious paraphernalia of a British officer, and in the morning crawled aboard an outgoing steamer—a thing closely allied to a social pariah; for when a young man cuts the service without some higher motive ostensibly in sight, it is considered decidedly bad form.

To say that nobody knew is rather a sweeping statement; for a woman knew, and also one other man, who did not cut the service. She did not tell; neither did the other man; Royd disap-

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peared, so practically nobody knew. And this story has only to do with the other end of Royd's long drawn-out term of misfit in the universe.

Neither does what had happened in the intervening thirty-one years matter much; for it was at the end of that time, in the present year, that the love replica came again to Kootenay Royd, ex-Lieutenant in Her Majesty's service.

Almost at the feet of Chief Mountain, close to the Montana boundary, a gigantic doorway has been cleft through the Rocky Mountains—the Kootenay Pass. In the mouth of the Pass, nestling among the grass-covered foothills like a string of blue-green jade stones, lies a crescent of water, delicately slender as a new moon—the Kootenay Lakes. In the lakes swim the gold-shimmered rainbow trout, almost the size of giant salmon. When the south-traveling sun bends to its autumn sleep over the snow-crested hills to the west at eventide, elk and caribou and bear and gray wolf steal down from the spruce forests, which lie like a velvet mantle on the breasts of the uplands, to the empurpled waters and drink in leisurely content, for it is far from the leather-scented trail of man.

On the brink of the middle lake crouches a small log shack; in the shack homes Kootenay Royd. And to him in the crouching shack, at

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the end of thirty-one years, came the thing of which no one spoke that other time, and made this little story.

The antlered deer and the trout with the shimmer of the rainbow on their fatted sides were not enough to Kootenay Royd. The spirits up in the mountains, always busy with their storm-making and cloud-building, gibed at him, and whispered at him, and conned over in black night that other story which nobody knew, until he cinched tight his broncho saddle on a piebald cayuse and rode many miles north to the land of the Crees.

He tied the ewe-necked cayuse to a tent peg outside of Stone Axe the Chief's lodge, dipped through the low-browed slit that served as door, and with much sign talk conversed with the red man over the expediency of accepting ten horses for his daughter. Weighed against her personal charms, a yearling colt would have been an exorbitant price to pay, but as the daughter of a chief, not a hoof less than twenty horses would secure her, Stone Axe explained.

Kootenay had seen Nichemous, the Chief's daughter, once at Stand-off, the unlawful capital of the whisky smugglers' domain. But that was not at all why he had come for her, even Kootenay knew that; she must have made medicine to

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lure him, or the spirit winds from the mountains had whispered her name when he sat in the midst of a solitude that was leagues broad on every side.

It was something of this sort; it could not have been romance, for she was ugly close to the point of fascination; built on the lines of a wheelbarrow—as devoid of grace, only blacker, and more disconsolately in evidence forever and ever.

Kootenay turned over to the pagan Indian chief the value of twenty horses; there was an unseemly tea dance at which the apostate pale-face became in verity a dweller in proscribed limits—a squaw man.

Kootenay took her back with him to the lop-sided shack that seemed forever threatening to commit suicide by a plunge in the trout-peopled lake.

Her talk drowned the voices of the wind spirits; and she kept the shack clean, and cooked his food after the crude fashion of her savage ancestry.

Kootenay read the books that came from other lands—Latin and French and English; and outwardly ripened in the personification of a man who had never worn anything but leather chapps since the donning of early raiment.

THE OFFCASTING OF NICHEMOUS

All this was toward the completion of the thirty-one years.

The Western world's knowledge of Kootenay was not extensive; he was "a queer fish," "a great hunter," "a good guide," a man who interspersed Latin quotations and classic oaths, begotten of Oxford, in the usual Western formula of embellished expression. An exploring scientist had had his soul startled over a camp fire by a guide with many days of unwashed travel thick upon his unfettered garb who dissected the methods of Dante and backed Phidias to give the moderns many points in the game of art; also cinched the pack animals with a thoroughness such as no other packer had ever achieved in his remembrance. All these things were confusing in the extreme; but they were as nothing to Kootenay, who was, after all, only a "squaw man," homing in the squat log shack that leaned plaintively out toward the jade-green lake.

It was in the thirty-first year that a man with the desire of ranching strong upon him set his family down in the middle of a cattle run twenty miles from the mouth of this Pass. Twenty miles in the West means a very close neighbor. And also with the new man was his daughter, with a year of age upon her for every mile of

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trail that lay between their new log shack and the homing place of Kootenay Royd.

Her name wasn't Helen at all; but this is a true story. The culture that was in Helen completely blotted out the many years of Kootenay's dwelling in the catacombs, until, though he was actually fifty-five, he was really just turned one score when he talked to her. That was why it all came back with such silly force—the love-thing. The man that was fifty-five, that was Kootenay, hunted and fished, and wandered up the steep sides of Chief Mountain for bighorn; and came back tired and sat dejectedly opposite the black Cree squaw, and called her “Niche-mous,” which means “My dear.” And the man who was just turned a score, that was Lieutenant Royd, galloped to the ranch and talked to Helen of the things that were in the East; which are books written by poets, and music that wails from the cord strings of a violin, and of lilac blossoms that grow purple, or lilies that stand pale at Easter, and of all the other unnecessary things which a squaw man should know nothing about; for if he do, and the squaw become more coarse in the fullness of time, it is all apt to end in the uncanonized way.

Also Helen sketched with a charming disregard of perspective and unnecessary variation of

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color. And this was one of the things that had lain buried for years in the man; so there were trips up in the passes, and more warmth to be put into the slate-cold skies, with which Helen topped the jagged mounds which she limned as mountains.

The man knew the utter failure of her much-awry landscapes—knew it as a charm that was as a woman should be—just art enough to still remain a woman to be loved. It was better even than the squaw who could swing an ax like a lumberman. She could do things, material things, could the Indian woman, and was useful; therefore he—hated her.

And all the time the Cree woman, coarse in her huge muscularity, saw these things, and the little, gnarled, blood-streaked eyes groped furtively for premonition of what it would all lead to. Perhaps it would mean sending her back to the tribe, where there was only much cold and much hunger, and a coarse toil that was much worse than the labor of pack dogs. She had never understood the white man who buried his narrow-lined face in books, and spoke so poorly the one language she knew; but she led the life of an angel compared with that other tribe life—that she could understand. That must be the reason why she now felt lone-hearted when the

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other was near. Yes, it must have been that: it was impossible that such a physical rebuke to the glory of creation could feel anything of love for the paleface who was not even a savage. The gnawing pain must have been because of the cold and hunger which was the heritage of her people.

The obese Nichemous saw every little act in the scheme of transformation which set in over the person of her white lord. One morning the grizzled locks that had rested erratically against his sloped shoulders for a decade were clipped close to the roots and tossed disdainfully out among the sienna-colored bunch grass. Then he shaved.

No wonder that the furtive little eyes that were like the eyes of a hippopotamus took on a lurid heat that burned back to the hot brain. When he bathed himself, a new vista was opened up to her slow, speculating mind; he was turning *wehtigo*—becoming crazy.

An Indian stalks game with a silent tongue, and the squaw watched much and said nothing.

The coming of the ranchman had been when the chinook—which is the gentle breath of the mountains when they are not angry—came down through the Pass and kissed the lonesome-hearted earth, and the hot lips melted the late spring snow that lay about, and the grass came

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up green, and the grouse mated. Then the summer came and sat in the lap of the prairie wherein the cattle man had rested.

The one thing that had never gone out of the life of Kootenay Royd was that he was, first of all, a gentleman. He could no more efface that completely than he could shed the straight, sharp nose, planted so firmly between his blue-gray eyes. This was what made the whole complication possible—made it impossible of comedy, and full of plaintive tragedy.

He and Helen were much together; for he was a man of leisure—a Bedouin of the Western plains. And the one that was blind, the man, built a fine castle of extraordinary architectural design—a veritable house of glass that was to shatter to diamond dust a little later.

When he spoke to Nichemous about going back to the tribe the gnarled little eyes that were like those of a swine did not light up in indignant astonishment; only sullen acquiescence came into them, for she had known that it was coming—this halting, hesitating proposal of the offcasting.

Together they rode over to where her brother had his tepee among the Blood Indians, and there it was arranged that Nichemous would take twenty horses as the price of the offcasting and go back to her people. It was like cutting

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the grizzled hair, part of the metamorphosis of Kootenay, the recrudescence of the man in the living catacombs.

If Kootenay's eyes had not been touched with rose salve, the strange feeling of loneliness, of having wrenched himself from something that had been in his life, would have asserted itself more strongly as he rode back to the crouching shack by the string of jeweled lakes; but he planned fast at his air castle, every mirrored wall of which reflected a sweet girl face; and the broad, black visage of the other grayed down into the dead past until it became only something that he had turned his back upon.

Nichemous stood stolidly in front of her brother's lodge watching the horseman as he loped over the tawny sea of gold-brown prairie. In the huge face was the gravity of many things; and in the little eyes the light of something which the slow-going brain had evolved from the chaos that had come into her existence. When the horseman had become only a tiny wabbling blur, she went into the lodge, sat down and smoked a small graystone pipe until the brass-ringed bowl-mouth became hot. At the end of three pipes she rose, took a rawhide medicine bag from the folds of a blanket, sat down again and crooned softly to it a strange guttural, "Hi-yi-yi;

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ooh-h-h, huh-huh!" On the white side of the medicine bag were two yellow and red diamonds, and a figure in blue like a spearhead; its borders were tasseled with coarse threads of buckskin. From a red handkerchief she unrolled two crude doll-like figures cut from birch bark, representing a man and woman; it was Kootenay and herself.

She pressed the man figure to her coarse, full lips—heavily, clumsily; then rolled them, face to face, in many folds of red cloth, slipped them in the gayly decorated medicine bag and hung it on a forked willow behind the tepee. Surely Kootenay's frail castle was buildd in the air, for this medicine-making was to undo all that had been done.

Every day and far into the night Nichemous made medicine with the charm bag to bring back the white man who had been good to her. Theoretically she knew nothing of love; she just wanted to sit in the warm shack and look wonderingly at the thin-faced man who laughed and frowned into books, and only troubled her to cook a little and fill his pipe. And the medicine that was in the bag stretched out its influence from the Blood reserve (for Nichemous went not to her own people) and got into the muscles of the white man. His arms twitched, and the winds from the mountain came down through the Pass and

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screamed at him through the chinks in his log shack, and the lapping waters of the lake babbled strange noises.

It was the medicine Nichemous made that changed all his plans; that drove Kootenay to break a lance with Fate moons before he meant to—that made him ride to the tourney of his undoing.

At the offcasting Nichemous had claimed his pinto riding horse as one of the twenty. At the time Kootenay had not understood why she was so insistent upon this point, for he could not hear her whispering to herself, "I will keep the pinto for when the paleface comes back." So he cinched up a chestnut broncho, with a great gaping hollow on its inner thigh where a wolf had sought to hamstring it as a two-year-old.

As Kootenay loped out of the Pass, the medicine that was to the south in the lodges of the Bloods drew him to the wrong trail. For an hour he galloped, conscious of nothing but that the air held the perfume of lilacs and the music of young laughter and the presence of love. Then the chestnut put the wolf-bitten leg into a badger hole and brought the dreamer with an exaggerated flourish down among the stunted yellow dandelions and purple violets. The man's energetic comments perhaps broke the

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spell of the tiny manikins, for when he looked across the prairie he saw that he had ridden miles out of his way.

That night he talked to Helen of things that were as startling as though Chief Mountain had slid out fifty miles into the plain in a single day.

Of course, it only meant much misery to the girl, for she had never thought of it in that way. It was the rose salve that had blinded Kootenay—that was all. The talk of flowers and books and the thrill of "Rusticana" had not made this squaw man of the old age a lover in her young eyes. At home there was the talk of cattle; of calves and cows and bulls; storms and grass feed and beef—nothing but beef—less romance than there was in the medicine bag of the squat, black squaw, and the glamour of this almost extinct gentleman had been pleasant as friendship—only as friendship.

Even from Kootenay the spell fell away, and he, too, saw himself as he had been before the coming of Helen.

The goblin in the medicine bag laughed as the white man rode the wolf-maimed chestnut dejectedly back to his log shack. Nichemous heard the laugh and crooned softly her weird witch song, and gave five horses to the friends that had been friends to her brother.

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When thirty years of life come back to a man in one day it is apt to stoop the shoulders a little, and for the full turn of a moon Kootenay sat by the emerald-green lake like one who has been caressed by a blizzard. He swept up the tiny fragments of his shattered castle and threw them out against the wind—the mountain wind that chided back, and carried the tale to the demon in the medicine bag on the Blood reserve.

Nichemous waited, for she came of a patient race, and took the little manikin from the rawhide, ocher-marked bag and caressed it until her bead eyes became blurred with mists of joy.

Every night the medicine-bag demon called to the lone paleface and twitched at his muscles; and every day Kootenay drew a pencil through a black-lettered date on a calendar that hung just over the table where he had sat so many times opposite the Cree woman who was Nichemous.

The effacing of the other time had been thirty years; surely now he would wait thirty days and drink of the wormwood tonic which was hopeless resignation.

Sometimes he laughed bitterly at the utter foolishness of the thing that had come to him. Living at the foot of Chief Mountain and seeing only blinking elk eyes, or the pig eyes of a griz-

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zly, had strangely tortured his knowledge of the eternal fitness of things; but Helen's quiet, kind, plaintive words had shown him how particularly akin to a mountain goat he had been since her advent.

Small wonder he sat for thirty days and scored himself with a rare inventive genius born of his excited condition. Sometimes it was with a levity that was all awry; sometimes it was the hollow despair of a man who counts the days since he became blind. Why was it this way for him? When he reached out for sweet flowers, his hand came back laden with nothing but the purple-belled monkshood—the blossoms of deadly aconite.

When he had penciled out thirty days of sitting in sackcloth he saddled the chestnut and rode like a drunken man to the lodge where the heavy-faced squaw crooned to the medicine spirit.

Neither this time did the red and yellow eyes show any surprise. She knew; it was as the demon had said it would be.

Of the horses he had given there were ten left, and in three days they were eating grass in the shadow of Chief Mountain; and Kootenay was once more just a squaw man, deep in the terrible pathos of what might have been.

THE HOME-COMING OF THE NAKANNIES

IF you travel into the northwest corner of Canada, close under the shoulder of the Rockies, and ask a Sicanee Indian about the Nakannies, he will fill his pipe and smoke, and talk about anything in the world but these people. By lavish expenditure of tobacco and other things of rare value, and by persistently pinning him down to the business in hand, you may get him to talk of them. He will tell you that they are bad-spirit Indians; that they always hear when they are talked about, but are never seen.

If two Indians go out after moose and never come back, the solution is simple—they are with the Nakannies. If a family start at grandfather and die off until even the last papoose, swathed and laced tight in its moss bag, is gone, that is the work of the Nakannies.

That is the belief of the other tribes; but the white trappers say that this tribe lives up in the gorges of the Rockies, and is tough—very tough.

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All agree, red, white, and "pinto," that the Nakannies were once in the flesh—very much in the flesh. That was as I am going to tell you.

Many moons ago they lived in the foothills of the Rockies, just at the great cut in the granite cliffs where the chinook wind comes smiling through and kisses the babe snow into non-existence. That time no iron horse tore through the azure-draped portals of the castle mountains; there were only the soft chinook and odd parties of Stonies or Nakannies, as they chased each other back and forth through the big gate.

The land of the Nakannies ran to the very edge of the stone rampart. They hunted the grizzly up to his rocky home and slew him; they ran the buffalo on the herb-turfed plain, and their tepees, built from the skins of the slain bison, stood gorgeous white in the autumn sun. They were not stock raisers; when they needed ponies they stole them. It wasn't really stealing—the ponies were the spoils of war; also the scalps of the Blackfoot, that came home with the horse-hunting braves.

War Cloud was the chief. He had two sons, Eagle Strength, the elder, and Day Child. Their spiritual life was looked after by Wolverine, a medicine man.

Then one day Father Descoign came among

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them. It was almost as though he had dropped from heaven. Of a verity he simply came among them. War Cloud gave him a tepee, and told the young bucks not to molest the paleface Medicine Man. If they were spoiling for excitement they could go out and cut the throats of the Blackfoot, or go higher up in the mountains a bit and fight Stonies.

Now the Nakannies were about as unarable a block of theological land as one could well look for, but that did not matter to Père Descoign. The priests were all like that; they came and hammered away at the unbelief of the pagan tribes until some one believed; then they kept on, and by and by others had faith.

The first to listen to the priest was Day Child. The father taught him French and the Christian religion.

Above all, the Indian has a simple directness of thought which gets very close to the root of things. The good father taught Day Child that the Manitou of the paleface was all-powerful, and that men who sold themselves to the Evil One were sure to suffer in the end. The simplicity of that appealed to the primitive mind of the young Nakannie, and the longer he thought over it the more certain he became that it was a very unpolitic thing to have anything to do

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with the devil. Many times he filled the red stone bowl of his pipe and emptied it over this untortuous problem before he crystallized his ideas in words.

At last Day Child spoke: "Your Manitou is chief over all the spirits, even as War Cloud is great among Indians. Is not that so, Paleface?"

"It is true," asserted the priest laconically.

"He is greater than the Evil Spirit you have told Day Child about?"

"I have spoken that it is so," answered Father Descoign.

"And the foolish braves you have told me of, who made treaty with this devil, will not go to the Happy Hunting Ground at all?"

"Day Child's words are true," the priest said.

"Then I will make treaty with God, who is your Manitou," said Day Child decisively, holding out his hand to the white man as earnest of his intention. "The Evil Spirit appeared to those foolish white men and made treaty with them; is that not so, Paleface?"

The father nodded his head in acquiescence.

"Then call your Manitou to appear and make treaty with Day Child, that I and my tribe may be at peace with this great Spirit Chief, your Manitou."

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Now all this was rather startling to the good father, and he realized that the air was, so to speak, full of great things. Either the faith of this young warrior must be held or his hope for good harvest in that field be forever abandoned. Bravery and diplomacy go hand in hand in the Christian crusade against the gods of the pagan Indians, so Father Descoign answered:

“I will ask my Master to speak to Day Child, whose heart is inclined toward Him.”

That night Father Descoign said to the young Indian: “To-morrow night the God of the pale-faces, who is also the God of the red man, will speak to Day Child where the river bursts through the hills and falls over the rocks.”

All that night the brave priest prayed forgiveness for the deed he was about to do. It was for the good of these poor people that he would impersonate his Master for a little time.

The next night Day Child saw God, even as the priest had said he would. The young son of the chief and two Nakannies crouched silently beside the waterfall and waited for the paleface Manitou.

All the little tricks the reverend father knew—the luminosity of sulphurous matches damped and rubbed on the face, and all the rest of it—he practiced. It was a clumsy enough represen-

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tation, but it succeeded; and Day Child made treaty with the Great Spirit, who told him that the priest would show them the proper trail to follow through life.

From that time on Day Child and his ever-increasing following prospered. They ceased from war and cutthroat horse-stealings and tilled the soil—childishly enough at first—and got cattle and waxed prosperous in the land which before had been but an ever-changing battlefield.

A blood fury was growing on Wolverine; his power was gradually becoming less. His medicine sometimes worked success for the braves who stuck to him and the old chief, but often worked disaster.

Sometimes, when they went forth to battle, and his medicine had said the foray would be successful, they came home very much the worse for wear and considerably battered—some did not even come at all. But the priest's medicine, which was God's law, worked for good always, and Day Child's band prospered.

Then Wolverine worked his charms and had a dream. It was that Day Child would become stronger and stronger because of the evil cunning of the priest; and, in the end, War Cloud and Eagle Strength would have to sit like squaws in

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the council, silent, when Day Child, who would then be chief, spoke.

He roused the fury of the Nakannies by saying that they would all become squaws. What would it profit them if they were prosperous and worked like women in the field? The Blackfoot braves to the east of them, the Peigans to the south, the Stonies who were in the west, and the Crees who crouched among the spruce and aspen in the north would close in on them if they were not warriors, and take all they had—even their scalps and their women.

What need had they to work like squaws—there were buffaloes to kill for meat, and their enemies had horses to give for the asking? What more did they want? They had fire and food and skins for their lodges and a great name as warriors among the fighting people of that land. Would they trade all these comforts and all this glory for squaw valor, and toil and slave like pack dogs? Would they be like this, or would they be braves?

Day Child and the priest had right on their side; but they were terribly handicapped because of the labor their policy entailed. Work will weigh down all the things of this world in the scale of an Indian's calculation. The priest's policy meant labor; Wolverine's, the traditional

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and actual life of an Indian—the killing of things for food and for pastime.

If the priest's argument had been backed up by cannon it might have succeeded, for he had a good start, thanks to his dramatic talent. But one morning the pitying stars, millions of them, ere they stole away into the blue vault that arched the home of the Nakannies, looked down and saw the cold, drawn faces of Day Child and his Christian followers staring up at them with soulless eyes. There had been carnage in the night, and Day Child's band, to the last brave, put to the knife. Even the good priest had died fighting with his comrades.

Remorse, and fear of the revenge of the pale-faces for the murder of the priest, preyed on War Cloud's mind, until he moved his whole tribe far north along the Rockies.

Moons came and went, and years rounded themselves into a decade, and War Cloud was called over the trail of mystery—the dark, unknown trail along which he had sent his own son, Day Child, moons before. His war pony was killed to carry him to the Happy Hunting Ground, and his arrows were put beside him. Food was left for the long journey, and his lodge was left standing and untenanted.

Then Wolverine spoke to the tribe:

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“ Brothers, behold I am Wolverine! When I sleep Manitou comes and whispers that which is good for the Nakannies. Who told you that your Chief, War Cloud, would be called to the Happy Hunting Ground in two moons? Was not that Wolverine, who stands before you?

“ When I make my medicine and blow it out upon the other tribes they become as children in their fear of you who are my braves. Who worked the medicine which brought the pitted disease that ate into the flesh of the Blackfoot until they died like scourged rabbits? Was that not Wolverine—and was it not because they came in the night and stole the daughter of our great chief who has now gone to the Happy Hunting Ground? When I made medicine the Nakannie braves went forth and laughed at the arrows of the Blackfoot and Stonies, and brought back war ponies and scalps and glory to the lodges of our tribe.

“ It was I, Wolverine, who knew, because of my medicine, that trouble would come to you through the little paleface priest, who spoke with the forked tongue of a false Manitou. But the Chief, War Cloud, who is now dead, had a good heart, and said, ‘ Let the little paleface rest in the lodges of the Nakannies.’ And for days Wolverine had evil dreams because of that.

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And the son of your great chief listened to the paleface, and became a squaw. And others of the Nakannies who had always been warriors became squaws also; they traded their war horses for the white man's buffaloes, and worked in the fields like dogs. And the Blackfoot, who live where the sun rises, laughed; and the Stonies, who are in the west, spat in the faces of these squaw Indians; and because of the medicine of the priest the Nakannies sat like whipped children and were afraid.

"Your Manitou, the Manitou of Indian braves, was angry, and spoke to Wolverine, and Wolverine showed these things to War Cloud, and he rose like a brave, and killed these squaw men—even his own son. That was the evil that came from the paleface Medicine Man.

"Wolverine, who had been far toward the rising sun, where the white men huddle like caribou, plenty as the trees of the forest, knew that they spoke with a forked tongue always; but War Cloud's heart was good, and his words were straight talk, and he did not believe Wolverine. When Day Child was dead, you know, brothers, how the heart of your warrior chief became soft with sorrow and the fear of the redcoats; and he told us to come away to this land of barren rocks where there are no buffaloes. But now,

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brothers, Eagle Strength, the son of War Cloud, is chief, and his heart thirsts for the land where he was born—where the buffaloes crowd the grass plains like clouds in the sky, and their fat will warm us and their skins keep us from the cold winds. Wolverine has made medicine, and knows that there are no redcoats there; and that the spirits of Day Child and his squaw brothers have gone to the Happy Hunting Ground.

“We will go back to our home prairies, and Wolverine will drive the spirits of the dead away, and you, my braves, will fight the Black-foot and the Stonies, and conquer because of the medicine of Wolverine. Are we rabbits to skulk here among the stones because we have killed the squaw men of the fork-tongued priest? Wolverine has spoken.”

When the Medicine Man sat down there was deep silence in the little valley in which they lived; for the awe of the home-going had stolen over the spirits of the Nakannies.

Then Eagle Strength rose, tall and stately, every inch a warrior, and stiffening his bronze body, threw back his head, and from his powerful throat came, like the note of a bugle, the joyous battle cry, full of defiance and eagerness and resolve. Every brave took it up, until the mountain side rang with the wolflike cry of hun-

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dreds of fierce voices. In their souls was that homesickness of years of exile from the child land, that lingered like a memory of Paradise to these outcast red men.

Now the chief who had kept them there in the wilderness, far from the land stained with the blood of his own son, was dead; and Manitou, through Wolverine's medicine, had told them to go back where the grass was rich and sweet for their horses, and the buffaloes, their buffaloes, thronged the plain; and there were enemies to fight in the open, and scalps and ponies to get by conquest. Small wonder that their hearts cried out in joy, and they looked upon Eagle Strength in the light of a deliverer! If Wolverine's medicine kept the spirits of their murdered brothers away there was nothing else of which they stood in fear.

When next the sun peeped down into the Valley of the Little Bears, where the Nakannies had lived and hunted for years, there was nothing but a few smoldering camp fires, a myriad of bare tepee poles, the empty lodge of the dead chief, and the grave in which he slept.

On the afternoon of the twentieth day of their pilgrimage back to the land of their nativity Wolverine said: "Spell here, brothers, for we are close to the land which is ours. The smell

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of the sweet grass is in Wolverine's nostrils, and the soft pad of the buffalo hoofs on the prairie run is in his ears. To-night when the hills rise between us and the sun we will go forward to the home that is ours; then in the morning, when Manitou sends the sun up in the east, it will find us there."

A Medicine Man has two qualifications, poetry and diplomacy, and Wolverine had played a strong hand in his last address. It would be better to get there in the night, because if there were objections to their coming there might also be objections to their going away. Wolverine would take the lay of the land in the dark, so to speak. That was the utility of the diplomacy; the poetry was for the Indians, and saved discussion.

When darkness had crept across the tangled mass of rosebush and sweet grass, and the yellow-faced Gaillardias of the plain, and chased the dying sun up the gray of the foothills, and across the splashing crystals of the Bow River, and draped the tawny forms of the Nakannies in its somberness, Wolverine spoke to Eagle Strength, and the tribe moved down the sloping approaches to the Rockies, and stole silently, like spirit shadows, across the prairie.

In each breast was the smothered joy of home-

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coming; in each heart the pagan fear of the spirits of their murdered relatives. Even the dogs trailed their tails, and with flapping lips skulked close to the heels of the silent squaws. Not a babe prattled. The flower carpet of the flattened earth muffled the hoof beats of the soft-stepping horses as the spectral troop slid through the thick gloom. It was the blood fear that was over all—the spirit terror.

In front Wolverine rode his gray horse straight as an arrow for the old camping home of the Nakannies. Even the horse, which was a sucking colt when the Indians fled from the fear of the redcoats, held his nose true to the point, as the mariner's needle cleaves to the north. Wolverine clasped the little medicine bag that dangled from his neck. Over and over he whispered a charm to ward off the spirit vengeance of Day Child. Once he turned on his horse and looked up at the Indian's clock—the star-jeweled "dipper." The gleaming hand, circling round the North Star, had moved three hours since they rested. They were halfway there, he whispered to Eagle Strength in a hushed voice. The chief leaned far over the neck of his horse to catch what Wolverine said. The muffled hollowness of the voice had been lost in the slipping of the hoofs in the dry grass.

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"Halfway," whispered Wolverine again; and Eagle Strength sat bolt upright and held his small bead eyes straight forward into the gloom.

When the dipper had cut three hours more from its circle path, and stood almost straight over the North Star, Wolverine stopped his horse and slid to the ground. The others closed around him silently, like soldiers forming up before a stockade that is to be assaulted at day-break. A little to the right the dark line of the earth rounded against the purple of the sky. The Medicine Man was standing with his face set against the mound. Eagle Strength and the others knew what that meant—on that hill Day Child and his band had made their last stand; and on its top, unburied, they had been left for wolf and vulture.

"Hobble the ponies and sleep here," whispered the Medicine Man hoarsely.

The night air was thick with stillness. Wolverine ran his hand over the flank of his horse; the gray was trembling, and his ears were twitching nervously back and forth—now cocking forward in nervous curiosity, now drooping back in irritable weariness. Wolverine knew—even the horses were afraid.

A low, trembling whimper cut through the

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night like a whistling arrow from the top of the hill on the right, the hill where the murdered Nakannies had lain. Then another and another weird call struck on their shrinking ears; a pack of coyotes had winded them. A pony broke away in affright and nearly stampeded the band.

Wolverine steadied himself, and spoke sharply: "Nakannies, are you all squaws to let your horses get away?"

Before any horse could be hobbled, a dull, rumbling moan came creeping through the grass and hushed the whimper of the wolves. It came from the black mass of mountains; then it died away as suddenly as it began. The Medicine Man grasped his knife and waited, listening. Again he heard it. It was like the roar of angry spirits in the mountain gorges—just a moaning, and then there was silence. Again it came, longer and louder this time. The horses pricked their ears, and held their heads high with outstretched noses, facing the black line of the sleeping hills.

Many times it called to them, this menacing voice of an angry spirit, always growing louder and fiercer. It was like the noise the "thunder bird" made when Manitou was angry. The fear that had been silent in the hearts of the

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braves began to mutter—they whispered to each other: “That is Day Child’s band crying for blood!”

Wolverine’s gray snorted and tossed his head impatiently from side to side, and rubbed his nose forcibly against the Medicine Man’s breast. Eagle Strength stood silently watching in the direction of the spirit noises. A dull, muttering rumble, breaking into a fierce, threatening call, startled them again, and a fiery eye glared at them from high up in the hills. Nastas, Eagle Strength’s mother, screamed and sank in a broken heap at the feet of the young chief.

The eye closed sullenly, the roar deadened, and there was only the muffled sound of something gliding through the gloom toward them. Then again it broke forth with malignant fury, shooting its rays in long shafts out into the darkness of the plain. It closed again, only to scorch their hearts nearer and fiercer the next second. No one spoke now; fear took them by the throat and paralyzed their tongues. They could see little bright flashes of light glinting from the scales of the huge monster all along its body as it rushed screaming and hissing down through the gateway of the hills. Back on its tail were two little green eyes that fascinated Wolverine. It was the angry God of the murdered priest—

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the destroying Manitou he had said would surely punish them for the killing of men.

Fear and anger fought in the blood of Eagle Strength. He had been a child—a fool. He had listened to the words of Wolverine and slain his blood brothers, the Nakannies, because they believed in this God—the God of the pale-face priest. He could see little green and red eyes peering at him from the darkness far in advance of the dragon god with the monstrous eye. They were lesser spirits coming to devour his people because of the sin the false Medicine Man, Wolverine, had led them into. The dragon might destroy his people, but his hand would avenge their blood upon Wolverine. The huge, trailing, fire-vomiting dragon was close upon them, when, with a scream of defiance and barbaric triumph, he plunged his knife to the hilt in the Medicine Man's breast.

This act roused the others. "Come, brothers," cried Eagle Strength, "we'll go back to our home on the Little Bear," and throwing himself on his horse, he yelled a war song and lashed his horse across the flanks.

As the tribe streamed over the plains to escape, the fire-belching monster circled in toward them, and the hot breath from his evil-smelling body smote upon the nostrils of Eagle Strength as he

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lashed the last Nakannie across the iron path, under the very nose of the demon. Then they melted silently into the darkness of the long, back trail.

Over on the dragon there was a screeching, hissing, grinding, as the feet of the monster gripped the iron of the gravel-packed trail and strove to stop its headlong charge. Passengers stood on their heads in the seats in front of their own, and cursed and prayed, each according to his readiness of habit. A short man in a blue coat, all spangled with brass buttons, slid from the side of the dragon and ran forward to its head, with a loose, blinking eye under his arm.

"What in blazes did you put on the 'emergency' for, Dick?" he screamed into the sulphurous jaws of the thing's head.

"Thought I was runnin' into a pack of fool Injuns," grunted a voice thick with the fullness of stopping a heavy express on a down grade. And a burly demon came out of the white, hot mouth and stood wiping his brow.

"Did you see 'em, Dick?" panted the little man.

"Seed a swarm of 'em, an' heerd 'em scream. An' the President, ol' Van Horne, 'd rather wreck the best engine on the road than have a greasy 'nichie' killed."

HOME-COMING OF NAKANNIES

"It's them spirits the fellows say are always about this ol' camping ground where they found a lot of dead Injuns when they were building the line. I guess that's what you saw, Dick."

"Spirits be hanged! They was cavortin' about on the track 'tween the rails on their saw-horse bronchos, an' I slid right in among 'em. It's a miracle if I hain't killed none."

"I guess it's all right, Dick—I hope we haven't killed any passengers," said the conductor, unshipping the eye from his arm. "All aboard!"

The little lantern described a circle in the air, the monster tore at the iron trail with his huge feet, the lights slid off and were swallowed up in the gloom of the prairie night, and the home-coming of the Nakannies had been disrupted by the Pacific Express.

THE "MISLED" COLLIE

ONE evening in September a "Misle"-coated collie stood watching the door of the Red Lion Inn.

Her attitude was one of pathetic expectancy—the beautiful, slim-tapered head cocked sideways, and ears thrust forward from the heavy neck-ruff, vibrant with the intensity of her interpretation of footsteps.

Suddenly the dog's frame stiffened with joyous anticipation; there was the shuffle of many feet; the swinging door pushed outward; and four men in working garb issued boisterously to the sidewalk.

The collie leaped joyously at her master with a yelp of delight, caressing his rough hand with her tongue.

"There, there, girl—down!" the man said, shoving her gently away.

"But, Watson, you're an old rascal," one of the jovial four ejaculated, clutching Watson's arm and twisting him playfully about.

Suddenly a mottled body with hair bristling sprang between the two; there was a gleam of

THE "MISLED" COLLIE

white teeth, an ominous snarl, and a pair of weird wall-eyes, fierce in anger, glared at the maker of the horseplay.

"Look out, Dan! have a care!—down, girl! She'd bite you in a jiffy, man," Watson cried in broken sentences.

Bob's assailant released his hold, and jumped back, in his eyes a look of admiration for the faithful collie.

"I'll buy her of you, Bob," he said.

"Will you, now? How much will you give, Dan?"

"Ten dollars."

"Not for a thousand, Dannie, my boy. I'd sell a wife first—if I had one. Ten dollars for Stracathna Princess! Man, I've been offered fifty; yon's a bench bitch."

Then turning to another of the group, he said: "Come on, Murray, I'll go a bit of the road with you."

Watson walked in silence beside his friend, the collie at their heels.

"What's troublin' you, Bob — you're dumpy?" Murray asked at the end of the block.

"I was thinkin' of Dan's ten dollars. But I couldn't sell the doggie—my heart, I couldn't sell her, Jock. Could I, girl?" he asked, turning to stroke the collie's head.

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"D'you see the answer in her eye, man—she's sayin' as plain as anything, 'No, you could na.'"

"She's a wise dog, Bob; she's almost human. But what is it about the ten dollars?"

"I have a chance of a job at Buffalo. I've been on the shelf since the foundry closed down, an' I haven't the price o' a ticket."

Murray pondered over this problem for a little, his hand clutching a slim roll of bills in his breeches' pocket—the week's wage. The money was needed at home—badly; but Watson would have helped him with his last dollar—he knew that.

With an impetuous movement, Murray crushed the bills into his friend's hand, saying, "Here's ten dollars for you, Bob."

But the other drew back, protesting: "You're needin' it yourself, Jock."

For answer Murray shoved the money into Bob's vest pocket, and turned away.

"I'll not borrow it, Jock," Watson said, "but I'll take it if you'll keep the collie."

"I don't want the dog."

"Keep her, man; and when I'm in funds I'll buy her back. If anything happens me, she's yours; and don't you see, Jock, you could get your own back, and I'd die, as I lived, owin' no

THE "MISLED" COLLIE

man. If I'd taken Dan's money, I'd have lost the old girl for all time."

"Well, have your own stubborn Scotch way, Bob; I'll take Princess; you'd better come with her to the house and have a bite of supper."

In ten minutes the two friends came to a little rough-cast cottage, setting back from the street.

"I've brought Watson home for supper, Margaret," Murray said to the slender woman who greeted him at the door.

Murray ate his simple meal in troubled silence. How could he reconcile his wife to the receipt of a dog instead of the needed money!

As they left the table, he said: "Bob's going to Buffalo, wife, an' I've bought the collie from him."

Margaret's face mirrored her dismay. It was just this careless improvidence that frittered away Jack's earnings.

"Are you no likin' dogs?" Watson said, for Margaret's silence brought an ominous lull in the talk.

"I have my hands full with baby; besides—" she closed her teeth on the lower lip and turned away.

"The collie'll take care of baby for you. She's a gran' hand wi' children."

This was a most barefaced assertion, for Bob

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was a bachelor and children had not come the way of the Princess at all.

"Collies are treacherous — they're apt to snap," Margaret retorted; inwardly she was wondering how much precious money had been wasted over the useless canine.

"I'll just show you, mistress—bring little Elsie here, and you'll see."

"It will frighten baby," Margaret objected.

"Not a bit of it, wife," Murray asserted. And going to the cot he brought the child and placed her on Watson's knee.

"Here, girl," Bob said to the dog. The collie put her wise head on her master's leg, and looked inquiringly into his face.

"You're to take care o' little Elsie, old girl," Bob said with great gravity. "An' if anyone goes to run away with the bairnie just grip him with your teeth."

The collie understood that her master's words had something to do with the child. She put her paws on his leg and, raising herself, stuck her cold nose in the baby's face, and caressed the chubby little cheeks with her tongue.

"Look at her, Mistress Murray; she knows. Didn't I tell you? My word, she'll die for little Elsie. Aye, aye, an' I'm leavin' her behind. But she'll be in good hands, Mistress Murray."

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"It's a useless expense, Mr. Watson; a big dog will eat as much meat as a man."

The little woman's face flushed as she said this. Murray had been ill the previous winter and they had got behind; all summer she had been trying to catch up and get even with the world.

"Meat, mistress!" Watson ejaculated in well-feigned astonishment—"porritch is the very thing for collies. Stracathna Princess—that's her full name, Mistress Murray," Bob said very proudly—"just loves her porritch."

Watson put the baby's legs astraddle the collie's back, and saying, "Come on, girly," strode solemnly three times around the room singing——

"Ride a cock horse
To Banbury Cross."

Little Elsie's eyes, as big and bluer than her mother's, stared wonderingly into the broad, good-natured face of the Scotchman; and Princess paced as proudly as though she were a pal-frey carrying a queen.

Margaret, forgetting for a second her apprehension of the ruinous expenditure, smiled in mother delight.

"There, bonnie blue eyes," Bob said, lifting

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the child from the collie's back, "give doggie a kiss. Kiss the bairnie, girl."

The baby drew her eyebrows together disapprovingly, but the collie imprinted a kiss after the manner of her kind.

The mother took the child, and Watson proceeded to explain just why Princess was the very best dog in the world.

He detected an atmosphere of trouble for Murray ahead over parting with the money. The little woman's uncordial reception of her husband's announcement set Watson thinking very deeply. He must square the matter for Jack by making the wife satisfied with the deal.

"Jock has come by a grand bargain, Mistress," he said, throwing a touch of envy into his voice.

"But we're needing every cent of his wages, Mr. Watson." It was out; the little woman had let slip the words she was repeating over and over to herself.

"Why, mistress, the collie's pups'll be worth more'n ten dollars."

"Ten dollars!" she exclaimed in horror. "And is Jack bringing pups, too—where are they?"

Bob turned in confusion and whispered to

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Murray, "Heavens, Jock, I made a bad break!"

Then squaring the slip with a little equivocation he continued: "I was meanin', mistress, that a pup o' this fine breed would be worth ten dollars. Did you ever hear of Cockie or Trefoil?"

"No, what are they?"

"They're just dust now, Mistress Murray, but they were dogs—gran' dogs, the fathers of all gude collies in Scotland. And Stracathna Princess is o' that strain—Jock knows that."

The husband nodded his head complacently, though it was entirely new information to him.

"P'raps you heard o' Johnnie Norman, Mistress Murray?"

"I may have, Jack has many friends, but I forget their names so."

Watson buried his face in the collie's neck. "I'm forgettin' you was never in Scotland, Mistress Murray. You see, there, if a man has just a common dog—not a collie—mind you, they tax him seven-an'-six; but a collie, bein' so wise an' useful, goes free, an' they're very plenty. So a good dog's name is a hoosehold word.

"Johnnie Norman was a gran' collie that was stolen; an' just among oursel's, Stracathna Princess is o' Johnnie Norman's blood. Murray

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knows that. He's a good judge o' a dog, is Jock. No man'll stick him wi' a bad one"; and Bob, stretching out his foot, surreptitiously pressed Jock's corns till he squirmed in agony.

Murray blushed at his friend's tribute so at variance with fact, but answered: "That's right, wife."

It was quite a conspiracy.

"You could put her on the bench," Watson declared, turning to the husband. "She has all the points o' a prize winner. There's the finest head you ever saw on a collie; the flat, wide skull that carries brain, tapering' like a lady's han' to her eyes. An' the long muzzle an' black nose are strong points. She has small ears, too—big ears would throw her oot."

Watson stroked the really beautiful head as though he were a mother caressing a loved child. "Aye, girl, you're a beauty."

"Tell me, Bob," queried Murray; "she's a queer color for a collie; and her eyes are sort of like glass marbles."

"A collie may be any color for the bench—it doesna' matter. The Princess is what they call 'mised'; an' the 'wall-eyes' always go with a mottled coat. But they must be slitted in like a fox's. I'll tell you the points; you might want to enter her at the Kennel Show. She has a long

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body and ribs well rounded up; an' the chest is deep an' narrow in front, but plenty o' room o'er the heart behind the shoulders."

Watson was at home on the points of a good collie, and, once started, would talk all night on his favorite theme. And he continued about the straight fore legs and the well-bent hocks and long pasterns of the hind, the arched toes, the double coat—the outer hair coarse and the inner soft and furry—until Margaret regretted having expressed any objection.

"I'll show you where the head comes in, mistress," Bob finally said; "the intelligence that's next to human. Just stay here, girl," he commanded the collie. "I'll go out the back door—I see it's a latch—an' do you, Jock, say, 'Find Bob,' an' you'll see what'll happen."

Watson went out, and when Murray spoke the mystic words, the collie went to the door and struck the latch with her fore paw until it freed from the hasp. Then she wedged her thin nose in the crack, opened the door, and with a yelp of delight whisked about her master.

Watson came in, his face radiant with smiles, saying: "You see, mistress, she'll be a companion to you when Murray's at work. Just learn her wi' 'Find Jock,' an' if she once gets the scent of his steps, she'll bring him if he's in the town.

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You could even go out and leave her wi' little Elsie; I'll guarantee nothing would touch the bairnie."

"She *is* wise," Mrs. Murray admitted. "Are you sure she'd not snap if baby pulled her hair—the little one's always clutching at things."

"No, she'll not do that. An' now I must be going away home, for it's late."

As Watson put on his hat, the collie sprang eagerly to the door, and stood waiting for him to open it.

"No, no, girlie," Bob said in a husky voice, "you're to stay here an' mind little Elsie. Up, till I say good-by," and he snapped his fingers at his chin.

Princess put her paws on Watson's shoulders; he threw his arms around her arched neck, drew her head in against his rough cheek, and when he lifted her gently down there were tears in his eyes.

"I'll walk to the corner with you, Bob," Murray said, passing out.

"I made a slip, Jock," Watson said, as they parted. "It was over the puppies. If anything went wrong, an' I couldna send you the money, or you were needin' cash, just sell the puppies. Stick to the mither as long as you can, Jock—I'm feared I'll be very lanesome without her."

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Watson went away to Buffalo, and Stracathna Princess waited patiently for his return.

In a dog's life a day is a whole cycle of time. When the collie woke in the morning, she remembered that her master was away, and, as had happened before, many times, would return—of course that day.

Sometimes as she lay on the front doorstep, head between paws, and eyes fixed on the street, little Elsie would creep through the door and fall asleep in the warm sunshine, her head pillowed on the collie's side. When the restless imp of growing strength tingled the baby's fingers, and she tugged at the collie's high-topped ears, or, kneading her chubby hands in the thick neck ruff, bobbed ecstatically up and down, crowing with delight, Princess would turn her head and nose to the plump-creased neck.

Sometimes the cold caress would bring forth an indignant lament; sometimes the mischievous digits would pick inquiringly at the slitted fox eyes. But nothing the baby did brought a snarl from the even-tempered collie.

When Margaret reproached her husband for the huge financial outlay, and he answered, "Watson would have helped me if I was broke—I guess the Lord won't go back on a man for

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doing the square thing," she kissed him apologetically, and said, "If we're very careful, we'll manage, I think, Jack."

It was in the patrician collie blood of Stracathna Princess to guard and watch over something. With her ancestors it had been sheep; so she literally interpreted her master's orders in the supervision of Elsie.

The little one was taught to say, "Find papa, Prin," and Watson's game of find-your-master was played many times in the little family.

Perhaps it was the going away of Watson, who was convivial, or the walks Murray gave the collie that altered the man's life. He went less frequently to the Red Lion, and there was more money for Margaret and her primitive housekeeping.

It was the fourth Saturday from the event of Princess that the household god of content was shattered.

Murray returned from the carpet factory with sullen depression in his face. A strike had been declared, and, as he handed the bulk of his week's wage to Margaret, he said, "I fought against it, wife, for winter's coming, and God knows we've not much to go on with."

The little woman sat down and cried; she was brave enough, but her slender form was

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strung with fine nerves that sometimes went to pieces.

The collie, feeling the unrest of something wrong, put her head compassionately in the disconsolate woman's hand.

"She's friendin' you, girl," the husband said; "she's saying to cheer up."

For a week Murray sat about the house smoking, or walked with the dog, and fought against the hypnotic influence the Red Lion thrust into his hours of idleness.

One morning four puppies squeaked and tumbled foolishly over each other at their mother's side—a pair of little dogs, sable-and-white, and two females, "misled" like their mother.

In six weeks the money was all gone; but that day Bob's ten dollars came.

"You see, wifie," Murray said, "a man doesn't suffer by helping a friend. We wouldn't have had this money now only for the collie."

Murray tried to get employment; but there were a dozen applicants for every place—sometimes fifty; and a carpet weaver was not a desirable man for general work.

Bob's ten dollars lasted two weeks. Then hunger sat and jeered at them in the little rough-cast house. People rolled by in their carriages, fur-robed and red of cheek, and the laborer, de-

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void of labor, cursed at the injustice of it all; and strolled many times into the Red Lion, on chance of a casual glass with its fatal warmth for his chilled spirits.

The day after the last dollar had gone, Margaret said to her husband, "Jack, there is no milk for Elsie, and there's very little bread for ourselves."

"I'll have to sell one of the pups, wife," the husband answered; "Bob said I might if I was pinched, and it's a case of sell or starve."

The pup was sold, and when Murray brought home five dollars he said: "This will carry us into work, I think, for they're all saying the strike is about over."

Princess was showing the effect of short rations, and Murray gave away the two females.

They existed two weeks on the five dollars obtained for the little son of Princess; the man did — Margaret absolutely starved herself, furtively hiding this from Jack. She grew weaker, wondering if she could hold out till the time of work.

Hunger-tried in the day when she was alone with the collie and Elsie, she indulged in costless epicurean feasts of fancy; the great juicy joint of beef she would have on the table when Jack was at work again. She held these wild revels in company with the collie; and Princess would

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blink her wise wall-eyes, and swing her tail gravely because of the faint smile on her mistress's lips.

Before the two weeks were up, Margaret fainted twice of exhaustion. It was the day that saw the last cent of the pup money go that Margaret tumbled, for the second time, in a crumpled heap on the floor; she was brought out of insensibility by the sympathetic tongue of Princess on her face.

It was the day before Christmas, and it had been rumored that this day would see the end of the strike.

When Murray came in in the evening he brought the same bitter tale of the unyielding master and obstinate men.

Margaret sighed as she sat wearily in a chair holding the child in her lap.

"Christmas Eve! and the last shovelful of coal is in the stove, Jack. My God! what's to become of us?"

"We can't freeze, little woman; I've just got to sell the other pup—that's all there is to it. Nolan at the Red Lion'll buy him. I've stood it off till now, but we can't starve."

"We can't starve!" what mockery—she had been starving for days.

Murray picked up the collie saying, "I won't

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be more'n fifteen minutes." Princess followed him to the door, and, as he stood for a second, looked yearningly at the pup in his arms.

"It's rough on you, old girl," he said, "but it can't be helped."

In ten minutes Murray leaned against the Red Lion bar, saying to the heavy-faced proprietor, "I've brought the pup you wanted."

"One of Bob Watson's breed?"

"Yes."

"All right, here's your V. Have a drop on the head of it—we'll christen the youngster. By Jove! we'll name him Christmas. Here's to you, Jack—Merry Christmas!"

The florid man said nothing about the little starved woman at home; she didn't hear, anyway, so it didn't matter.

Then the glasses were filled again at Jack's order, lest the stigma of meanness should smirch the name of the man.

"Merry Christmas, ha, ha!" some little devil in the clinking glasses had sneered the mocking laugh.

Murray left the saloon, his hand grasping the crisp bill in his pocket; a comforting influence stole up his arm and threw his shoulders back. He had gone in shivering with cold; he issued with a warm glow at his heart—he forgot to

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button his coat. The cheery liquor enveloped the five dollars with the potentiality of fifty.

The sidewalk thronged with Christmas shoppers, animated of countenance.

A man touched Murray's shoulder, and a familiar voice said: "Well, Jock!"

"Bob Watson! God, man!" Then the two friends held hands for a minute in silence.

"I'm just back from Buffalo to have Christmas with the collie—an' yourself, Jock, o' course," Watson said. "Come an' we'll have a drop for auld lang syne."

Murray complied hesitatingly, objecting, "I must hurry back to the wife."

"Come on, man—I'm goin' with you. We'll just have a smile first."

Watson furnished the smile; and then—a man must be a man—Murray carried the ripple of hilarity along with another smile. And over the glasses with their loosening-up power, he told the whole story of his troubles. But Watson had saved money, and declared he would stand by the man who had loaned him his last dollar.

When Nolan saw Watson, he brought forth little Christmas.

Bob's eyes became jewels of delight. He snuggled the pup under his chin; put it on the

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oak bar, and called them all to witness the glorious points of "Christmas."

"Sable-and-white," he cried exultingly; "man, alive! that's the Charlemagne cropping out—a grand strain indeed!"

Murray leaned over and whispered in Watson's ear, "I wouldn't have sold him, Bob, if I could a-helped it."

"Tut, man! he's in good hands—the Princess's enough for me. And, Mr. Nolan, we'll just trouble you to wet the feet o' little Christmas."

Then Watson, as breeder of such a fine dog, felt called upon to do the honors of the occasion. A dozen times little Christmas was brought forth to be shown to the friends of Watson who dropped in. The proprietor had the price of the pup back in an hour.

The liquor had laid its strong grasp upon Murray's half-starved physique, and subdued his consciousness of the flight of time.

At first he repeated at intervals, "I must go, Bob"; now he drank in quiescent waiting on his friend's pleasure.

Christmas Eve at the Red Lion; in the little rough-cast house it was this way:

When Jack had gone, Margaret lighted a lamp and peered into the stove; the fire was

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almost burned out—and the scuttle was empty. She placed Elsie upon a shawl beside the stove, and opened the oven door. As the stored warmth issued, the collie stretched herself beside the child.

Sitting down, the mother tried to rest, as she waited her husband's return. She couldn't. Nerves are all-powerful just before they break; they dragged the weary woman to her feet, they paced her up and down the room.

A half-hour went by—an hour. A gong in the little box of wheels on the shelf said it was eight o'clock. Why did not Jack return—something must have happened him—he had been killed, run over?

The jerky nerves drew fanciful pictures of disaster. Elsie was sleeping nestled against the collie's side, but the room was getting cold—the fire had gone out; she put the little one in her cot. As Margaret rose from the chair, she staggered; and as she stooped to lift the child, glimmering lights, violet and blue-green, blinded her—she was choking. Then, with a call of " Jack," the little woman pitched forward, the collie's body breaking her fall.

The frightened child set up a wail; and Princess, crawling from beneath her mistress, stood trying to puzzle out the extraordinary happen-

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ing. Why did her mistress lie there without speaking? The child's wail stirred her heart with a lonesome feeling.

The collie stepped forward and peered into Margaret's face, then caressed it; she lifted her paw and tapped the woman's shoulder pleadingly—there was no response.

Subtle instinct told Princess that her mistress was ill; and her little playmate, Elsie, was in trouble because she cried—just like her own pups used to.

Her brain, that was only a wise dog's brain, worked confusedly at the disturbing tangle; it needed a lead in the right direction from the finer-working mechanism of a human mind.

There was an air of unrest over the room, such as comes before a storm—the child's plaintive cry vibrated her sympathy. It made her restless; she wanted something—her pups or her master, or even if the mistress would but speak. She wandered about the room, sniffing at the nooks into which her puppies used to crawl. A pair of Murray's boots with the man's scent started a clear thought—her master and her pup had gone away together. And in the room was but the child's wail; Princess felt a desire to howl in sympathy. She trotted back to the pathetic group on the floor, her nails clicking the boards

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with a depressing loudness; and put her muzzle against Elsie's face in consolement.

The child pulled at her mother's cold face, crying, "Mam-ma—papa—want papa." Then she suddenly became possessed of an idea, born of chance and the dog's cold nose on her cheek, and shoving the collie's head away, she said, "Find papa, Prin!"

The collie stood irresolutely; she had never played that game with Elsie at night, and alone.

"Papa—find papa, Prin!" the child repeated, with a touch of imperious crossness.

The collie understood it now; it was an order; her master must be just outside, where she had always found him.

Princess trotted to the door, sniffed the crevice, then, rising, tipped the latch with her paw, and clawed it open.

As it closed behind her, she nosed the step, and in her nostrils came the scent of her master's going.

In a dog's mind the present idea obliterates everything. Her desire to howl was forgotten in the new discovery of her master's trail.

Down the path she hurried, along the sidewalk, to the right, to the left, wherever the footsteps led—crossed and recrossed as they had

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been by others; on, taking her wonderful way to the door of the Red Lion.

Her shrill collie bark carried to Watson's ear.

"God, man!" he cried, "I'll take m' oath——"

He darted to the door; as he flung it open, Princess sprang against him with a whine of delight. Then she raced to Murray, in whose hands was little "Christmas."

"She's followed the pup," Jack said, as the mother smothered the little chap's face in her caresses.

Then Princess raced to the door, uttering a sharp calling bark; then again to the pup, giving it a hurried kiss; and once more to the door.

Watson watched the collie's erratic movements with intense interest. Suddenly he said, "Jock, she's been sent for you; there's something wrong, I fear—come away, man!"

Watson's words steadied Murray's senses that were swaying because of the liquor. Without a word he pushed through the door, and the two men almost ran; dread and the cold night air mastering the liquor fumes.

As they swung up the path, the little house was quiet—there was a light. As Murray stood for a second in the doorway, Elsie held up her hands, crying in delight, "Papa!"

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Murray lifted the senseless form of his wife to the bed, saying, "Quick, Bob, the doctor—the red light on the corner."

Margaret lay like one dead. The husband put his hand over her heart; it took a length of time to detect the weak flutter. He chafed her hands, crying in an anguish of remorse, "Margaret, girl, wake up—oh, my God!"

Elsie was crying on the floor. He put her in her cot, and reproached himself with strong words, "Woe to me; I'll never drink a drop again—I've killed the little woman."

Then the doctor and Bob came hurrying in.

"She'll be all right," the doctor said, after a little. "It's lucky you caught me in, though—she's so weak that a half-hour might have made all the difference."

"The collie was just in time, Jock," Watson whispered to Murray, as the doctor sat by the bed.

THE INFATUATION OF ACKERLY

ACKERLY was an inspector of police in Burma. That was at Thayetmyo.

He was tall and square and round-cheeked—a splendid specimen; just the sort of man to throttle men who needed it.

“Not an ounce of sentiment in his gladiator head,” some one said. That was what they thought; in point of fact his great muscles were wrapped up in sentiment. That was why Mystery held up her cloak, and threw a shadow across his path.

If the Gomez girl had been beautiful, or even pleasing, the thing that happened might have been put down to the irresponsibility of a full-blooded youthfulness; but the Gomez was short and squat and broad-featured and black. She was “twelve anas in” of Hindoo blood, and not an ana of it had lost any of its darkness.

There was nothing to account for Ackerly's infatuation — absolutely nothing — except her playing. That was the one thing she could do — play the violin.

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When I say *she* could, I must stop and think what a man who knew all about those things once said: "It is not this woman who plays; some spirit comes and uses her hands—that is all." It was like that, too.

The violin, a gentle-walled Cremona, had been in the Gomez family since the time of Pietro, Marie's great-grandfather, who played like an angel, tradition said. And all these years the spirit had lain asleep until Marie's fat hands had cried it into wakefulness.

Of course she had learned the thing. A sister was married to an engineer in a rice mill, and his money had been used freely to teach her the workmanship of the arts. That was in Calcutta—she had been sent there.

This in itself was a mere bagatelle, the tuition she received, as compared with the spirit that used her hands. It was only the knowledge of perspective an Angelo might use for one of his masterpieces.

Tall, broad-shouldered young men are fairish marks on the matrimonial rifle ranges; and Ack-erly had been brought down by about as sweet a girl as anyone could very well wish for. That was before he went to Thayetmyo; and it made the infatuation all the more like a piece of the evil goddess Kali's work.

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I have said that the Gomez's one accomplishment was the violin—but she had another. She could send that same subtle, magnetic influence that thrilled through the vibrating strings of the sobbing violin out to master the minds of animals.

The first time Ackerly saw her was at her father's place. Old Gomez had asked him down to see Marie make a king cobra dance; that was the way *he* put it. But then old Gomez had no soul for anything beyond the fleshpots of a rich son-in-law; and so knew nothing about the terrible power that came from the talking strings.

A hamadryas is a king cobra; as vicious and as deadly as the capello, and as strong as a boa. But as Marie Gomez drew the bow across the strings of her violin in wailing tones, the king cobra was like a slim, silken ribbon, for the spell of the spirit numbed his vicious mind.

"It's extraordinary," Ackerly thought, as he sat and watched, and listened to the spirits in the violin calling to the king cobra. And "Boh"—that was the cobra's name—understood them too.

When Marie ceased playing the cobra dropped full length on the hard, beaten ground, a servant threw a basket down, and he glided in.

As the Gomez raised her eyes, Ackerly looked

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into them. He should not have done that, for the sighing of the spirits in the music had gone into his muscles, and he was ready for the harm that was to come. He tried to remember where he had seen those eyes before; all at once it came back to him—it was that black leopard he had faced in Chittigong once. The leopard had eyes like that.

After this there was no rest for Ackerly; nor, for the matter of that, for his friends. Friends can't see a fine young fellow throw himself to the devil—this is what they said he was doing, though the Gomez was hardly as bad as that. All the same it wasn't the proper thing—no good could come of it. He couldn't lift her up to walk where she'd get dizzy; she'd only tumble, and there'd be sorrow all over the place. That was the way the friends figured it out, and they had many good precedents on their side of the argument. No white man had ever done it yet; the man had always been dragged down to the level of the other. The friends looked at it from a reasonable, fair-to-all point of view. That was because the spirits in the fiddle hadn't talked to them.

Ackerly knew that all they were saying was quite true; but what had that to do with it? When they talked to him he said they were

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right; he was no end of an ass, and the girl was as black as his hat—the hat he wore in England. He admitted it all, and cursed the whole Gomez family for a lot of “ thugs.”

But when the spirits that were in the girl sent their voices down through the tamarind trees that stood thick between the two bungalows, calling to him on the wailing violin, he rose, and went and sat where he could look into the eyes that made the cobra droop his head. “ Devil’s eyes ” she had, the friends said; but they haunted Ack-erly day and night. They weren’t evil, he thought; but that they would work evil for him he knew, just as surely as any of the others.

And when he had come, the short, squat figure would huddle itself close beside him. And the music would talk to him of love and rest, and the sighing of the violin was the sighing of angels, and the sobbing, the crying of wrecked hopes; and the full notes were a godlike majesty, and the low, soft plaint the whispering of the winds in the gossamer leaves of the tamarind.

Nobody, not even the Gomez, knew about this, the only bit of truth there was in the whole thing. She thought it was for herself that the strong-limbed inspector of police came—because he loved her. Had not her sister, who was also fat, married a sahib; a sahib who drew six

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hundred rupees a month—more even than the Government paid Ackerly. The Gomez family had always held their heads high since this commercial alliance; and the “six hundred a month” had gone with unvarying regularity toward keeping up the position they fancied they held.

Marie knew that Ackerly's friends were kicking up a *boberie* about it; but that was because they were jealous; there were no other Gomez girls to be had—she was the last.

When she tried to talk to Ackerly about these things, he said: “Oh, hush! Get the fiddle.” It was that way; when she talked to him he felt the degradation of his position—when she played, he forgot it. It was like the drunkard hurrying himself under the influence of liquor to shut out the barrenness of being sober.

The king cobra was always about, too. “I believe that devil is jealous,” Ackerly once said to the Gomez girl. “See the way he looks at me.”

“Oh, he won't harm you!” replied his companion; “he likes the music, that is all. If I tell him to go live in your bungalow, he will go.”

“For Heaven's sake don't do that!” exclaimed Ackerly. “He'd strangle me, or else I should kill him.”

The squat figure laughed a little, and made

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a pass at the cobra with her fiddle bow. He raised his head slightly, blew out his hood, and then glided off among the silk leaves of the plantain trees.

"I'll send him to your bungalow to-morrow," she said, "to guard it, lest some other girl comes and steals you away from me."

"If you do, I'll shoot him," replied her companion, looking at her with a grave, determined face.

She pulled the bow across the strings of the violin that lay upon her knee; and the note cut through him like a knife. Yes, it was some one dying, that was the cry that came up from the strings.

"You see," she said, looking into his face with those strangely lighted eyes, the leopard eyes, "if you kill 'Boh,' you kill me."

"You must not say such a silly thing as that," he answered angrily; "it's only a cobra, and should be killed."

"No," she said, and the violin was wailing again, as the bow touched it tremblingly, "if you kill him I shall die. I can't tell you about it, but that is so."

And then the violin wailed and moaned, and the cadences of the dirge rose and fell, just like the wind sighing through the gaunt cassarina

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trees, with their harp bows, which grew down on the salt-sea shore where Ackerly's white girl lived. She let the hand that held the bow suddenly stop and lie across his wrist, as she said: "And if anything were to happen to you, it would be the same, too, I should die."

The hand scorched his wrist, and her voice, which was only the continuation of the plaint that had come from the violin, seared his ears, and lay hot against his soul. It was an accursed thing this; even if she *were* to die, or the whole family were to die, he couldn't wreck everything—his own life, the life of the girl who lived down where the cassarinas grew, and his mother's life. That was *all* so; but strong as these things were, they were not so strong as the other, the voices that spoke to him from the fat hands of the Gomez, and told him to come night after night, and sit where the big, black eyes might look into his.

The next day Ackerly heard a soft rustle in the corner of his bedroom. It was "Boh."

When the inspector saw him he swore like a proper soldier. That was because the sound of the violin was not in his ears, and he was more or less in his right senses.

He took his police sword down, exclaiming: "I'll not stand your infernal nonsense, anyway."

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It's bad enough to play the goat with a Portuguese half-caste, but when it comes to keeping a menagerie it's too much of a good thing."

The cobra looked at him sleepily; he felt sure that nothing would happen to *him*.

Ackerly took two steps toward "Boh," then stopped. "Hang the thing!" he said; "he's harmless, and I suppose I've no right to kill him—there'd be no end of a row over it. He's just crept in out of the sun, I fancy." So he put the sword up, and threw a guava at the cobra. "Boh" dodged the little round fruit, and glided into a hole in the wall he had already found.

Ackerly thought of what the Gomez had said about sending "Boh" there to keep his heart true to her. "There's no danger of that," he exclaimed angrily; "if anyone blacker or uglier than she turns up, there might be a chance." You see, he used to score himself heavily when he was away from her, trying to break the infatuation, as a man reviles liquor when he is sober.

"Boh" heard him, and spread his hood in anger when he spoke of the Gomez as being black and ugly.

That mail Ackerly got a letter from the girl down by the sea—the white one. There was none of the weird music of the fiddle in it; noth-

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ing but plain trust, and an undercurrent of love, only discernible by the little eddies it threw to the surface. It made him revile himself, but helped nothing toward breaking the spell.

As he sat on the veranda reading it, "Boh" came out, glided up on the ironwood rail which ran from post to post, and, lying full length, looked at him questioningly.

"Curse the brute!" Ackerly said, and threw his cheroot at the cobra's head.

"Nice chum you've got," a cheery voice laughed, as the owner came through the dining room. It was Green, the deputy commissioner, who had come in the back way. "The Gomez's pet," he continued, nodding his head carelessly toward "Boh," as he pulled a chair alongside of Ackerly.

The cobra glided down the post and disappeared. "I've offended him," he added. "They say the beastly thing knows what you say to him. Can't understand why he should have picked up English though; 'Chee-chee' *bat* (half-caste patois) would be more in his line."

"Have a cheroot, Green," said Ackerly, holding his cigar case toward the newcomer.

"I have written to have you transferred to some other place," continued the deputy jerkily, as he lighted a cheroot. "If I could only find

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out where there's a good healthy scourge of cholera on, I'd have you sent there," he added, looking indulgently at the inspector.

"Look here," exclaimed Ackerly, shifting in his chair, "you fellows are bothering your heads confoundedly about me. Leave me alone. I'm all right."

"So was Sanburn," said Green—"and he shot himself at the finish. 'Chee-chee' love is hell, that's what it is, my young friend."

"Well," answered Ackerly, "when the order comes I won't budge. I'm not a griffin just out from home, to be ordered about the country by a lot of paternal cusses who have gone through the whole thing themselves, and are sick of it."

"What'll you do?" asked his friend laconically.

"I'll cut the force first—go into something else, where I'll have a little say in my own affairs. I'd like to be my own master for a minute, just to see how it feels."

"You'll never be that if you stay here," asserted Green decisively.

"Here, have a peg, and shut up," broke in the inspector. "I'm sick of the whole business—sick of you fellows lecturing me as though I were worth bothering about. Besides, Green"—and he reached over and laid his hand on his friend's

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arm and looked in his eyes with a queer, tired look—"it's no use—I can't help it. We may talk here, and say it's a bad business, and I may kick myself good and hard; and then, when the devil that's in that woman finds me out again, and talks to me through that accursed violin, or the black, gloomy eyes, the whole thing is upset, and I don't care a rap what you or anybody thinks."

It was a long speech for Ackerly to make, for he wasn't a talking man. Also, there was much in it to think over. So they both sat for a few minutes quite silent. There was only the soft slip of the bearer's feet on the hard floor, as he brought the "peg" his master had ordered for the visitor.

At last the friend spoke, and in his words was much unhewn wisdom.

"You're an ass, Ackerly," he said pointedly; "but the saving grace of the thing is that you know it. If you didn't, it would take magic to save you. You may buck all you like, but if you simply don't lay violent hands on me while I'm busy with it, I'll pull you out of the mire yet."

Ackerly laughed incredulously. "You're a good chap, Green, among your Burmese *kranies* (clerks), and your mudcoated villagers, but

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when it comes to playing against the Gomez, she'll beat you out. You remember the Hindoo *fakir* who came here one day and sent a boy up a string into the air, and we never saw him again?"

"Yes, I remember," said Green, listlessly.

"Well, with all your codes of procedure, and your books on how to do this and how to do that, you couldn't account for it, could you?"

"No," answered the deputy absent-mindedly, wondering what it had to do with the thing in hand.

"Nor could you bring the boy back again. No, of course you couldn't. Neither can you tell anything about the power this woman uses to send me up a string, if you like. Neither can you bring me back again. That's because your logic is of the West, where you've got to get at the cubical contents of the thing before you can do anything with it. You've got to measure it, and weigh it, and pound it up, and assay it—and then write out a sort of formula about the thing.

"But this other problem you can't understand, because it's of the East; but it's as simple to these close-to-nature beings as your mathematical rot is to you. There, I have spoken. Drink your peg, and let's gallop down to the polo grounds—that's healthier. And also if I ride hard per-

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haps I'll break my stupid neck, and it'll save you meddlesome grannies a lot of worry."

As they went out they saw "Boh" lying under the veranda, his wicked eyes gleaming like two blood-streaked diamonds.

"Did the woman give him to you?" asked Green, nodding his head sideways toward the cobra; "or did she send him here to keep your mind fixed on her? You're the bird, and he's to keep up the fascination, I suppose."

"I don't know," answered Ackerly carelessly; "he turned up to-day—that's all I know about it." But it wasn't; he knew the violin player had sent him—he could feel it.

"He's really not a cobra at all," remarked the deputy. "In the books on snakes he goes under another name. I forget what it is—'devil' for choice, I should say."

They played polo, and nobody's neck was broken, not even Ackerly's. After dinner Green called at the policeman's bungalow to lug him off to the club. "I must amuse this strange animal," he thought as he went up the steps, "until I break her hold on him."

But Ackerly was gone. "He's over there," muttered the deputy, nodding in the direction from which came dreamy, sensuous music. "I'll go and take part in that *séance*," he told himself.

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"If there are two of us, it will split up the blessed thing, perhaps."

He found the inspector sitting beside the black Gomez. Of course she was playing to him, just as she had been to the cobra that night. It made Green angry; his anger silenced him. He said "Good evening" sullenly as he came up to them.

Ackerly looked up good-naturedly, and pointed toward a big chair. "I suppose you want me. I'll come with you in a minute. Sit down," he said. He nodded toward Marie, and ejaculated "Play!" for she had stopped.

As Marie played, the deputy's anger slipped away from him. He tried to think of why he had come—tried to remember why he was angry. But the melody was of green fields and sunshine, and water splashing over the rocks, and of birds; and nothing else there—nothing only love. It was the song of a love dream.

He sat a long time watching the fat hands caressing the spirit-voiced violin, and wondering why he had been angry at all—why the thing was wrong.

When she ceased playing, and there was only the squat, dark-faced figure bulging misshapenly in the white muslin dress, he thought of the unholiness of it all. Surely it was something to un-

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dertake, the redemption of his friend from this mystic spell.

"Come along, old chap," he said rudely, getting up and putting his hand on Ackerly's shoulder; "we promised to meet the colonel at the club at ten o'clock, and you've forgotten all about it." That was an impromptu lie, but Green knew he'd never do penance for it. The fair-haired boy beside him was worth a great deal more than that, if he could bring him back to his senses.

"Don't preach," commanded Ackerly, as they swung along the hard road together. "You've seen what you've seen, and you're going to do something; but don't preach—it's no good."

That was why Green said never a word for days to his friend about the Gomez; but stuck close to him, until the inspector began to almost hate the sight of his face.

"You're too confoundedly friendly," he said fretfully; "I'm sure you're neglecting your villagers looking after me." That was because the influence wasn't good for his nerves, and he was getting irritable. Green wasn't trying to cure him that way; he was only holding him in check until the *coup d'état* he had planned should come off.

He had worked out the saving of Ackerly

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with his wife. "A woman is worth a dozen men in a case of this kind," he said to himself. To her he said: "I want you to help me a little. Ackerly is in a bad way; something has got to be done pretty quick. If they trap him with a marriage it will be too late.

"I've written to have him transferred as far as they can send him. The correspondence is only just nicely under way as yet, and I have received fourteen communications from three different departments about the matter. And it appears that I have nearly ruined the man's character as an officer; also considerably damaged my own as a man of sense, I think.

"They want me to specify my charges against him. Has he been looting? or taking bribes? Is it drink? has he been hanging the natives about? or is he simply inefficient? One department intimates that he is not supposed to take orders from me; and if he has been insubordinate, it serves me right.

"At any rate, they are not paying traveling allowance for officials from one end of Burma to the other, simply because somebody wishes somebody else shifted, they say.

"That's only a part of it," he continued despairingly. "One man who seems to have got an inkling of what's in the wind—inkling!

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Great Cæsar! I thought I had put it as plain as I dared—writes that the Government is not a maternal institution, looking after harebrained youngsters, and keeping them out of matrimonial entanglements. I should say they weren't; but they'd weed him out quick enough if he married the Gomez."

"Well, Jack," said Mrs. Green, "you've got to send for the other one; that's the only way. She'll come quick enough, too. She loves this soft-headed youngster, and she's got sense enough to lift him out of this business."

That was the *coup d'état* that Green was holding Ackerly in check for.

Ackerly was leading a haunted life. Green stuck to him with a feverish intentness. "I must hold this young ass till Jess comes," he thought. "Jess" was the girl.

On the other side "Boh" had nested in the inspector's house; and often when he fancied he was breaking away from the spell a little, the devil eyes of the cobra would peer at him from some hole, and he could feel that the Gomez saw him, and was reproaching him.

Of course, he went many times over to the other bungalow. Sometimes the violin called to him down through the tamarinds; sometimes the dark eyes beckoned to him out of the night.

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Then one day Jess came. She stopped with the Greens, as had been arranged. They took Ackerly in hand with a proprietary right, but with much diplomatic gentleness; that was Mrs. Green's doing.

The Gomez knew the other had come, and *why*. She talked to her violin, and it wailed back; and the big, gloomy eyes looked at "Boh," and he, too, knew. It was all the doing of the spirits that worked through the fat hands which caressed the strings of the throbbing violin.

"How is it going, Jack?" Mrs. Green asked her husband. "Does he go there now?" That was two or three days after Jess had come.

"I think not," replied Green. "Looks as though it's broken up."

He was right in a way. Ackerly had not gone to the Gomez's since Jess came; but it was not broken up—not by a great deal. The young fellow was only torturing his soul that he might be a man for three or four days. He talked to Jess in the evening, and then went to his own bungalow, and the sobbing violin carried its tale of anguish to him through the heavy, Burmese night.

"Boh" only knew what the violin cried; that for three nights his mistress Marie had sat with scorched eyes and low-drooped head.

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The fourth night from the coming of Jess, Ackerly and Green sat late on the veranda of the latter's bungalow. Jess had gone to bed, and Green had kept his friend there long into the night.

"Have you seen 'Boh' about here lately?" asked Ackerly, trying to speak carelessly. "He's cleared out from my bungalow, and I was afraid that—that——"

"The Gomez had whispered to him about Jess, eh?" continued Green, as Ackerly stumbled in his speech.

"No; but he's quite likely to come over here from my bungalow; I wish you'd keep an eye open for him, and if he bothers club him away."

Then Ackerly thought of what Marie Gomez had said about sending "Boh" to prevent his falling in love with any other girl. What if there was anything in that, and "Boh" should revenge his mistress on Jess.

He was still in this train of thought when he was startled by Jack's wife gliding toward them with a fright-blanced face.

"Jess!" she gasped. "The cobra!"

Ackerly knew; his thoughts had just been of it.

"Quick, Green, your twelve-bore!" he ejaculated, with subdued earnestness. Green handed him his shotgun, and they hurried to Jess's apart-

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ment. Ackerly knew exactly what he should find; he knew just what "Boh" would do.

At the door he stopped. On the dressing table a lamp was burning, and by its light he saw "Boh's" flat, arched head, with the wicked, gleaming eyes, erect and motionless, not two feet from Jess's face; the body of the cobra was coiled up on her breast. Jess was awake; her eyes moved, but for that she was perfectly motionless.

"Don't be frightened, little woman," he said tenderly; "I am going to shoot, but don't move."

Then without raising the gun, for he saw the evil in the cobra's eyes, he fired point-blank from his hip. The report was terrific in the closed room, and the heavy pall of the sulphurous smoke shut out the sight of everything.

He sprang forward, and his strong arm swept the girl, covers and all from the bed. There was really no hurry, for "Boh" was stone-dead, his ugly head shot to pieces.

Green had never arranged for that act in his *coup d'état*.

Whether it was the death of "Boh" or not I am not prepared to say; but the mystery and power had passed away from the Gomez from that time.

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Marie didn't die physically as she had said she would with the death of "Boh," but the other, the greater, died. The spirits called no more to Ackerly from the strings of her violin.

THE STEALING OF THE BUDDHA PEARL

WHEN a man is rich he joins the 100th Hussars—if he can; when he loses his money he retires—he must. That's what Hadley did—both. It was in Rangoon.

An officer out of service is about as useful as a bronze Buddha in Covent Garden; and the more Hadley thought of things he might do, the oftener he came back to the predominant idea of a popular crossing to sweep, somewhere in London.

Then rose up Balthazar, the Armenian, and started him in the pearl-fishing. Balthazar was an individual who had momentum and much money. Hadley had brains and honor—there you are.

MacAllister, of Singapore, furnished a stanch craft of seventy tons, the *Ruby*; also good "Hinks'" air pumps. Balthazar sent Lahbo, son of Mah Thu, who lived in Mergui, with Hadley. Lahbo was coach—Hadley would soon learn, the Armenian said.

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All the pearl fishers went to Mergui, in Burma, for their pump boats and crews. Hadley hired three boats with crews from Ragathu, for six hundred rupees per month. For each boat he hired a diver: Angelo, Pietro, and Lahbo.

He was in luck. Angelo was the best diver in all the Mergui Archipelago. If other divers got thirty shells in a day, Angelo got fifty; when they brought none, he still found a few. Paralysis never came near him, though he dived deeper than any of them—worked farther out in the deep water where the best shells were. When the other divers strove for his secret, Angelo showed his white Spanish teeth in a laugh, and said it was the medicine he rubbed on that kept him from the divers' devil, the paralysis.

Hadley's allotted station was off Pawa Island—Pawa, where the great waterfall tumbles sheer over the rock-cliffed shore into the sea. It was good fishing there, and each evening when the boats pulled alongside the *Ruby* her decks glistened with the gray-green shells, big as soup plates, that were thrown over the rail. There were pearls in some of them, too; sometimes loose, like a cherry in the jelly; sometimes grown in the shell, like a fly in the amber.

Perhaps it was trying to keep up with Angelo that caused Lahbo to be laid by the heels by the

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dreaded paralysis. The second week of the fishing he came up unconscious, and when he opened his eyes again he was paralyzed. Hadley did not turn him off like a broken-down horse, but nursed him. "Hanged if I'll send him off there to live on betel nut," he said. "He's come to it working for me, and I'll see him through."

That was Hadley's way. So he fed him generously, and doctored him intelligently, and paid him with a Quixotic fairness. And when Lahbo went back to Mergui at the end of the season he told Mah Thu that Hadley Thakine was as good as a Buddhist.

Then the mother went and smoked her che-root on the veranda of Hadley, the pearl-master's bungalow. The little eyes, like cheap yellow beads set deep in the heavy Burmese face, watched the white man furtively as he came and went. When the eyes were satisfied, she told him her secret—of the Buddha Pearl. That was because he had been good to Lahbo. Years before, a Buddhist priest, Crotha, who was favored of Buddha, wanted to build a pagoda on Pawa. So he carved little images of Buddha from the alabaster, and put them in young oysters. These he put back in the sea near to Pawa. "The oysters will cover the Buddhas

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with nacre," said Crotha, "and I shall get many big pearls."

He invoked a curse on any who should come by the pearls dishonestly, and put a sacred mark on the shells so that they might be known.

When Crotha thought the pearls had been formed, he called Sebastian, who was Mah Thu's husband, to dive for them.

Now, Sebastian considered Buddha somewhat in the light of an impostor; and when the big pearl oysters with the marks were fished up, he gently strove to sequester them for the use of his own church. Nobody ever quite knew just what happened on the boat, for they were all killed in the row that ensued. Even Crotha, who was with them, was killed.

Mah Thu knew the spot. Outside from Pawa, one mile to the east, is the Iron Dog Reef; fifty boat lengths beyond this, sailing south until the great waterfall is opposite the first iron dog—that was the spot. Mah Thu's story was so straight, and her eyes—the gnarled little yellow eyes—so full of truth, that Hadley believed her.

I must keep Angelo for this work, he thought. So when Angelo's money was all swallowed up in gin and religion, and little side issues, he ad-

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vanced him more to live on; that was against the next season's work. Lahbo would be fit to work again also, the doctor said.

When Hadley went out next season, Mah Thu went with him to show the place where the great pearls were.

Beyond the Iron Dog Reef Hadley anchored the *Ruby*, and the divers worked back and forth.

It was Lahbo found the teakwood ribs of Crotha's boat sticking up out of the sand, quite half a mile from the *Ruby*. It was in twenty-five fathoms, and the pressure was great. Lahbo had been so long under water that his tender signaled him to come up.

At last he came, with eight shells in his bag. As he reeled in the bottom of the boat, faint and giddy, one of the boatmen gave a queer cry of awe. Lahbo looked at him drunkenly; in the sailor's hand was a shell with the sacred mark of a pagoda on it.

"Loud-voiced fool!" said the diver, "throw it with the others." Then he swayed like a broken shutter, for he was half-paralyzed by the terrible pressure, and fell in a heap close to the shells.

"The sun will kill him, oh, you brothers of oxen! Put up on this side the canvas that he

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may have shade!" exclaimed Neyoung, the tender.

And to make hot water for the stricken man he built a fire on the small clay fireplace just in the stern. When the fire was burning strong, and the canvas had shut off the boatmen so that they could not see, Lahbo clutched his mate by the arm and pointed to the fire and the marked shell. All the weariness of the paralysis had gone; there was only a murderous look of cupidity in the oblique eyes of the diver. The tender understood. He shoved the little iron tongs that were used for the charcoal in the fire, and showed his pawn-blackened teeth in a grin of appreciation. Soon the tongs were red hot; Lahbo had taken a cork from the pocket of his short white jacket.

Then Neyoung put the hot iron close to the hinge of the gigantic shell and slowly the saucerlike lids opened. The cork was shoved in to keep them in that position, and Lahbo explored the inside with a sliver.

The boatmen heard a sharp cry from behind the canvas. "Lahbo is in pain," they said.

"It's a pearl from the gods," hoarsely whispered Lahbo to Neyoung, as he held in his hand something he had gently rolled out with the bamboo sliver.

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Then they used the hot iron again, and the cork was taken out; the lids closed, and the hinge was made wet, and the oyster was tossed back among the others, and only the great pearl, large as a man's thumb, nestled in the trembling hand of Lahbo. The yellow in his eyes was streaked with blood-red pencilings. Surely the pressure had driven all the blood to his brain—it was on fire. He strove to clutch at his throat—he was choking; his hand refused to obey; a deathly numbness was creeping up the arm. The pearl clasped in the palm of his hand was ice; it was freezing the blood, and all the time his brain was on fire—the smoke was smothering him.

He tried to call out; the muscles of his tongue had been cut; it lay like an idle thing in his mouth. Then slowly, inch by inch, the freezing crept up his arm, pricking and stinging like a thousand points. He tried to grasp it with the other hand—to shake it into life again; it, too, was utterly powerless.

Then he knew.

Back across the shells he drooped, his eyes, with the red-streaked yellow, the only thing of life now left in his stiffening body.

Neyoung, the tender, also knew; and his black eyes glistened with a new light. With a

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wrench he tore open the stiffening fingers which clasped the pearl and slipped it in his mouth.

He knelt down and shoved his long yellow arm among the pots and things stored in the end of the boat. He found what he was searching for—a ball of black pitch. Making a hole with his thumb, he shoved the pearl in, smoothed down the pitch, and threw it carelessly back where it had lain before.

Then he called: "Ho, brothers! Lahbo is dead," and threw the canvas down.

They rushed aft and looked at Lahbo; the eyes of the paralyzed thief looked back at them, and they knew he wasn't dead—only his muscles strangled by the evil spirits.

Then they seized the oars and pulled for the *Ruby*, for the wind was dead and the sea flat as the blue sky above them.

Mah Thu leaned over the brass-studded rail, her wrinkled face looking like yellow parchment on the mirror water, as she watched them carry Lahbo up the little ladder and lay him on the deck. She took his poor, useless head in her lap, and Hadley watched the big pearl shells brought up. He was passing them through his hands when he suddenly stopped and held one out toward Mah Thu.

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"That is one of them, O Thakine," she exclaimed.

Lahbo's eyes tried to say something, but they did not understand. Mah Thu thought he was in pain, and rocked her poor bent old body back and forth in anguish.

Hadley brought his little tub close to Mah Thu and opened the marked oyster. There was nothing in it—no pearl.

"The evil spirits have stolen it!" cried the woman.

Again the eyes that were in the dead body of the paralyzed diver tried to say something, but nobody understood him—nobody only Neyoung. He knew, and he muttered to himself: "I must send Lahbo away to Nirvana, or those devil eyes will tell that I have the pearl."

In all the other oysters was only one pearl—not a Buddha pearl. Mah Thu, Lahbo, and Neyoung were sent back to Mergui in Lahbo's boat. And all the way in Neyoung's eyes was the light of murder; and in Mah Thu's watchfulness; and in Lahbo's something he wanted to tell, and which nobody understood—nobody but Neyoung.

Hadley continued fishing, but no more Buddha pearls came his way.

One moon from that time Neyoung landed

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in Singapore from the "B. I." mail steamer to sell the stolen Buddha pearl to Rico, the Russian Jew. That was Rico's business—buying stolen pearls from divers.

Rico had a nose for pearls keen as the vulture instinct that finds a sand-buried horse. He swooped down on Neyoung, but the astute Burman would not show him the Buddha at first. He played Rico for a time. When the Jew saw the pearl he went mad.

Rico had seen big pearls, and bought them, too, but never anything like the Buddha pearl. It was as large as the jewel Tavernier had paid half a million for in Arabia. Rico knew that, for he knew all the great pearls in the world. The luster was good also. Neyoung dealt like a Burman who has an eager buyer after him—sulkily. If Rico wanted the jewel he could take it at the tender's price, twenty thousand rupees; if he did not, then the Burman would take it on to Freemantle, in Australia, and sell it to Simonski. How that set Rico's brain on fire! Simonski to get this, the greatest pearl since the time of Tavernier? Not if it cost him fifty thousand; but, slowly—a thousand saved was a thousand gained.

So for days they fenced—this subtle Burman and the scienced Jew.

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And all the time Neyoung was trembling lest the eyes of Lahbo should tell Mah Thu of the pearl.

Then one day the sale was completed. Neyoung got a thousand pounds.

That night Rico took the razor he kept for that purpose and cut the throats of twenty fowls. It was a sacrifice to the god that had sent the pearl to him. It was an extravagance—he could not eat them; but he was drunken with the wine of success. He had never committed an extravagance before; also had he never come by a pearl for a thousand pounds worth twenty thousand.

When he got home he locked the door of his office and cherished his find. He opened his vest and rubbed it against his heart. He kissed it with his black, snuff-smudged lips. He put it on his table, and sat with his arms folded in front of it for a long time, drinking in the beauty of its vast contour.

Suddenly he gave a cry and sprang to his feet. The color seemed to have changed; a red, murky tinge had given place to the faint purplish luster he had been worshiping.

He sat down with a hollow chuckle and gave a sigh of relief; it was only a passing fancy, or some drunken shadow, for the pearl-white was

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back again. All this excitement was not good for him, he thought. He would put it away—lock it up in his iron safe, where it would be out of his sight.

When he touched it a shudder ran up his arm. How cold the thing was! The perspiration stood out on his forehead as though he had taken an iced drink. When he placed it in the safe he fancied that two glassy eyes were staring at him from the dark interior. Surely the excitement had unstrung him a bit. When it was locked up he felt better; besides, the thought of the great gain he would make warmed his chilled blood.

Next day he sent it to Dalito, in London, for sale. He described it to him as an irregular, pear-shaped pearl of great luster, weighing one hundred and fifty carats.

Then for a whole moon he knew no rest. He had insured it, but if it were lost or stolen! It was the one great thing he had achieved in his life.

At length he heard from Dalito, but the letter only increased his unrest. Evidently there had been some mistake. His letter had stated that the pearl was pear-shaped, of great luster—the one they had received was of no distinct form at all, but approached the button-

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shape; the luster was bad, of a reddish cast; but they would try for an offer in the London market.

Rico was in despair. Somebody had stolen his priceless pearl and substituted this red, formless thing.

Then the memory of what he had seen in his own office—that red shadow—came back to him with full force—also the eyes in the vault. What if this were a devil pearl—he had heard of them; where murder had been committed, and the ill luck stuck to the jewel.

He laughed at his own folly, and sat down and wrote a scathing letter to Dalito. He, or somebody, was trying to rob him, he wrote. Then he tore it up hysterically, and wrote a beseeching one. This he also tore up. Next he wrote, he hardly knew what, and waited for further news.

The second letter from Dalito stated that, on closer examination, the pearl seemed to be of much better luster than they had at first thought, and that there was every prospect of selling it to an Indian prince for a very fair price; they would cable him the offer as soon as received, before closing.

Rico cut the throats of more chickens and wept tears of gratitude. Surely it was good to

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be alive—and deal in big pearls. He prayed that the heart of the Hindoo prince might be made to lean toward him.

The next letter was one of despair—despair on the part of Dalito. They had sold the pearl simply on the strength of their guarantee that it was of good luster. Now the prince had sued them for damages, and brought half a dozen experts as witnesses who swore that it was of a vile red. They had been forced to take it back, and pay costs, bill of which they sent, and expected Rico to remit the amount. Under the circumstances they would ask to be relieved of the privilege of holding the jewel.

The only thing that seemed tangible to Rico in the whole thing was that the pearl retained its weight one hundred and fifty carats. Verily if it had not been for that he would have cut his own throat instead of the chickens'. He cabled them to send it to Antwerp. There it brewed worse mischief. Two men, an expert and a dealer, got into a wrangle over its luster, and wound up by fighting a duel. But that did not settle the dispute, for there were other experts, some of whom swore it was red, while others declared it white. But to sell a pearl of one hundred and fifty carats it must have a steady, sustained reputation; and soon Antwerp

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was no market for Rico's prize. The Jew would have to send it far from the strife it had created in Europe, so it was transferred to a big firm in Hong Kong.

Because of its likeness in shape to Buddha, its holder there narrowly escaped assassination twice from fanatical Buddhists. It was sold once, and the seller was beheaded for defrauding the buyer, a rich mandarin.

In despair Rico had it brought to Singapore. He would at least see it again. Then one day a brilliant idea came to him. Angelo had stopped at Singapore on his way to Australia. He was on a trip, and, incidentally, would now and then dispose of a few pearls that had stuck to his fingers.

Rico had known the diver for years, and knew that he could trust him to carry out the mission he wished him to undertake.

"Angelo, my friend," said Rico, "my house is thrice accursed because of this shadow of a heathen god that changes color. I, a poor man, have given a thousand yellow sovereigns to a thief of a Burman for it, and am ruined. For days I eat nothing because of the poverty that has come upon me. Simonski, who lives in Freemantle, is rich; he has robbed and cheated the poor divers—even you, too, Angelo—and now

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he is rich. Take you this purple devil and sell it to him for a thousand sovereigns, even as I bought it. Of a surety you may keep a hundred of it for yourself. Tell him that you have come by it at the fisheries; and show it to him when you are both calm in mood, for methinks men's passions bring the blood-red into the unchristian thing."

Then Rico fairly wept at the loss of the hundred sovereigns, and the disappointment of the great chance that had gone by him. He chuckled sneeringly as he thought that Simonski would also have days of tribulation, and that presently he should have his rival's gold in his safe.

"He will buy it, Angelo, he will buy it," he said, as he walked up and down his office excitedly, dragging his long, talon fingers through his yellow-gray beard. Then he stopped and faced the diver, looking pleadingly into his eyes: "And, Angelo, if you get from Simonski more—twelve hundred pounds, or even more, you will bring me, a poor man, my thousand. Think of the money I have spent in commissions and insurances—all lost, all lost!

"Surely you will get for me back my thousand pounds; but if not, then the nine hundred—that you will get for me, Angelo. Remem-

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ber, next year you will have pearls to sell, and I will pay you good prices."

Angelo did not take in the full pathos of the Jew's plaint; but he made up his mind to bleed Simonski for all the big pearl would fetch. Rico had said nine hundred pounds, and that was all he would get; the rest would be his perquisite for working Simonski.

When Angelo landed in Freemantle he was met at the steamer by the Jew. The diver was diffident and haughty; that proved to Simonski's astute mind that he must have something good—something very good—up his sleeve.

They were both artists. Angelo was Simonski's "dear friend." But Angelo answered that Simonski had paid him poor prices before; this time it would be a great price—a really great price—more money, perhaps, than the Jew had.

At this Simonski grinned and smote his chest, and was on the point of making a boast when he suddenly remembered that he was a buyer, and said: "Yes, alas! I am a poor man; the divers have robbed me because of the prices I paid them until I am poor. Rico, who has robbed the divers, is very rich."

He thought he saw a look of disappointment creep into the eyes of Angelo. "But I can borrow the money, my peerless diver, by paying

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ruinous interest, so be it the pearls are good. But pearls are cheap—very cheap this year. Big pearls sell for little more than small ones, because everybody is poor—everybody but Rico.”

But not even that day did he see the pearl. Angelo, who had come by the cunning from his Spanish father and the patience of waiting from his native mother, knew the Jew was not quite ripe.

At last the day arrived when Angelo became mellow under the gentle influence of the Jew’s alcoholic friendship.

Simonski had not seen the pearl before—the diver would never show it. When the Jew beheld its size he thought that perhaps he would build a small synagogue if the favor continued till he acquired the gem.

Angelo threw his arms around the Jew’s neck and kissed him like an impulsive Latin. In the end he made Simonski a present of the pearl—for twelve hundred pounds.

Then he took the nine hundred pounds back to Rico, and his own three hundred to Mergui.

Simonski sent the Buddha to Dalito, even as Rico had done. “I am sending you the greatest of all pearls,” the Jew wrote; “it ought to bring twenty-five thousand pounds at least.”

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More he wrote, for the words cost nothing. "He will fall in love with my queen of light when he sees it," thought the Jew poetically, while he waited for word from Dalito.

The London dealer's letter was hardly a love epistle when it arrived. "This accursed bauble has turned up again," he said, "after nearly ruining my reputation as a respectable merchant; or else there has been a shower of devil pearls out there, and you have each got one." He refused absolutely to have anything to do with negotiating its sale.

Simonski was horror-struck. Then a suspicion crept into his mind; Dalito was crying down his jewel because of its priceless value. Did he not talk that way himself every day when buying? But this was too serious a matter; a pearl of that size! It was beyond cavil; he would teach Dalito a lesson. So he wrote to a trusted Jew friend of his in London to take it over to Antwerp, and advised Dalito to deliver it.

It landed his friend in jail in Antwerp, and cost Simonski many pounds to get him out, and the Buddha back again. They were all in league to cheat him out of this fabulous gem, he knew, for had he not seen it with his own eyes? and it was good.

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Then he sent it to Hong Kong, to the same firm that had it before; but as it happened, his letter got there first, and when the jewel arrived they promptly reshipped it to Simonski without opening the case.

When it came back he was nearly crazy. Day and night he had paced his room thinking of the mighty pearl.

Then Simonski thought of the King of Burma at Mandalay. He paid big prices for jewels, and was not so particular about color as they were in London. He would have to take it to Rangoon to reach him. So he went at once to Rangoon, to Balthazar; he was the man to get at the king.

All this time Mah Thu had been trying to find out something. Her little yellow-bead eyes were always watching.

When Neyoung came back from Rico—from having sold him the Buddha pearl—he spent money like a son whose rich father is just dead. Mah Thu saw that. Then the curse of the Buddha pearl fell upon Neyoung, for his money melted away and left him with only a craving for opium.

When Angelo returned, the three hundred pounds he had got so cleverly from Simonski were not to be spent without many little boast-

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ings. To have done up a Jew of Simonski's caliber was, of a surety, cleverer than having gathered many tons of "pearl shell."

Mah Thu heard it in the bazaar, and questioned Angelo about it. Yes, it was shaped like a little bronze Buddha—much like the little black alabaster Buddha in Mah Thu's lacquer box.

Then Mah Thu talked to Lahbo about it. She had learned to understand the eyes. When he shut them quickly, that was "Yes"; when he rolled them, that was "No." Mah Thu asked him questions, and he answered—that was their language. So Mah Thu asked Lahbo: "Did you see the Buddha pearl when you dived the last time?"

The eyes that had been always trying to tell something opened and closed eagerly, many times. "Did Neyoung steal it?"

Again the eyes answered "Yes."

"Did he bring it to Mergui?"

"Yes," answered Lahbo.

At last Mah Thu understood what the eyes had always been trying to tell her; and the eyes looked so glad.

It was plain enough. Neyoung had sold it to Rico, and Rico had sold it, through Angelo, to Simonski. When cornered, Neyoung con-

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fessed gladly enough. He had nothing to lose now; he was starving; and if he went to jail, even for many years, he would have plenty to eat—and they would allow him a little opium lest he should die.

“Yes,” Angelo said when questioned, “I sold the devil pearl, the thing that goes red and white by turns, like a changing lizard, to the Jew at Freemantle.”

But there was no law broken in that; so the diver had no fear—only pride at his cleverness.

Hadley followed up the course of the unfortunate pearl. He learned that both Rico and Simonski had failed to sell it in Europe, and that the Freemantle Jew had gone to Rangoon with it. He took the first steamer for that port himself when he learned this, taking Angelo with him to identify the pearl. He also had Neyoung’s written confession of the theft.

He went straight to Balthazar, saying: “One Simonski has come here with a pearl. Tell him I want to see him.”

Now, Balthazar had the Buddha in his possession. When Simonski brought it and he saw its great size, he knew that the spirits of his forefathers had sent it to him that he might become rich among men. He had marveled much

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at the Freemantle Jew's stupidity in not sending it to Europe.

He was a man of much silence on occasion, so he said nothing to Hadley about this.

The Freemantle man thought he had a new purchaser for his jewel when he met Hadley. "Surely the pearl was worth ten thousand pounds," he told the captain. "Never had such a precious thing come his way. Yes, three thousand pounds was its price, and the next day he would show it." That was because Balthazar had it then in his hands to decide about buying it.

The captain meant to seize it when it came into his possession. But that night it was stolen from Balthazar. Captain Hadley heard this in the morning, and told Angelo of it.

"Fernandez has stolen it," said Angelo; "he was a diver, but because of stealing he came to Rangoon. He has taken it—he alone knows how to steal and sell pearls. These Burmese know only to steal rupees." Also he assured Hadley that he would get it for him. "Give me one hundred pounds, master, and I will get it from Fernandez."

Then the captain went to Simonski and told him that the Buddha pearl was his; it had been stolen from him at the fisheries by Neyoung,

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and he, Simonski, had bought it from another diver, Angelo. Now it was stolen again, and he would hold the Jew responsible for its value, the three thousand pounds he had said it was worth.

The Jew saw trouble ahead. He swore by the beard of Abraham that he had never said it was worth three thousand pounds. It was a vile, gnarled thing of infamous color, not worth a hundred pounds. He had been ruined by it—it was an accursed thing, bringing nothing but trouble to honest men. It would be better if they never saw it again; and the thief would go to perdition because of it, sure. If he had asked three thousand pounds for it from Balthazar, that was because the Armenian was rich, while he was a poor man and the pearl had ruined him. But the Buddha had been stolen from the Armenian, he declared, and he would make him pay its value, three thousand pounds.

Simonski was in despair. If he recovered the pearl, Hadley would seize it; if he did not the captain would try to make him pay its full value. If Balthazar paid him for it, this man would seize that. Surely evil days had fallen upon his house.

Captain Hadley was also uneasy. To come so close upon the jewel and then lose it was

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really too bad. It would be difficult to grind the money out of the Jew. All depended upon Angelo's being able to get back the pearl. A hundred pounds should fetch it, Hadley thought, if the diver could get at the right man; for it would be difficult for a thief to dispose of a jewel as large as the Buddha pearl.

That night Angelo brought to his master the stolen Buddha. Yes, it was Fernandez who had taken it. But he had given his master's word that nothing should be done to the thief; also had he paid him the hundred pounds—all except ten pounds, which he had kept for his own trouble.

At last the Buddha pearl had come back to its rightful owner. Hadley had not stolen it; he had come by it in the fishing at Pawa; so the curse of Crotha fell away from it when it came into his hands.

Crotha's pearl had accomplished much. It had humbled Lahbo and Neyoung and Rico and Simonski. And now it brought good fortune to Hadley, for he got twenty thousand pounds for it in England when he sent it there.

He gave Simonski five hundred pounds at the finish. He declared that he would give him nothing; but when tears stand in a man's eyes, what can another man do?

THE NET OF LEO

PHILIP FLEMING, Akyab, was Commissioner of Arakan, Burma.

Commissioners are made by hard work, from honest material; Government kisses seldom go by favor, notwithstanding club belief.

The Indian Civil Service is a monastery wherein men are consecrated to the labor of empire extension. It is a car of Juggernaut, wheeling the new religion of betterment over their worn bodies.

Commissioner Fleming was a giant of huge official wisdom, holding codes and civil procedure at his finger tips. The governorship of Burma would accrue to him as surely as a crown comes to the rightful heir. Philip Fleming in the lesser life was a babe, holding belief in the goodness of human nature until it stultified itself in large type. He was impregnate with such rich juiciness of honor that he had in his own kind the sublime faith of an ox.

This state of mind was altogether before the happening.

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Fleming had married young. If marrying young is a mistake, in his case it was seven kinds of a mistake, for the more he developed the work fever, the more Helen, his wife, became a lily of the field.

An impatient man, out of cause, would have developed a crisis; but Philip waited, almost not understanding, until the crisis came with a vehemence.

It is not a story for new reading; it is so old, old, old.

His soul was in his work; his heart was really in the bungalow; but the work soul cried for rest and consoling to the heart, until the heart responsive was a little too quiescent. It wasn't that Helen was bad—just selfish. Somebody must smooth the mold to the lilies that toil not, and the monastery that was the Government service laid heavy penance of toil on its zealous priest.

Thus the old, old story fructified.

At the time of the coming of the crisis Helen was at Darjeeling with the children, Roscoe and Madge. On the Akyab rumor board she was ill. The station people read this cynically; they always knew far more than they knew—that's an Indian habit. Then one day the commissioner was called suddenly by wire to Calcutta—

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Helen *was* ill. In two weeks Philip returned with his little boy and girl; the mother was sleeping under the sweet-perfumed hill deodars, and their cones dropped gently on the little mound in summer, and the snow covered it pure white in winter.

If the commissioner had worked before, now he toiled.

For a year the children were the children of an ayah, which is little better than being the offspring of Spartans. If Philip could have sent them to England it would have been better; but he couldn't—his heart would have starved.

A commissioner's bungalow without a mistress is as useless, socially, as a convent; in fact, the commissionership is a dual office, social and official. So Akyab groaned in its desolation. It was a place ill-favored by the gods most absolutely, for the previous commissioner had come among them worse than single—he had brought a Burmese wife.

Meetha had nursed him just on the sloping bank of Styx—he was almost rolling in—up Pakan way; and he, with unofficial chivalry, had married her, *pucca*—as thoroughly as church and state could seal the contract.

So his tenure of office had been a social blank; and now, in Fleming's time, the big bungalow

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was just a homing place for the silent man who sent dacoits to the Andaman Islands, or hanged them out of hand.

There was a deputy commissioner, Jack Rawlton; and, also, which was of greater importance, he had just the cleverest wife that ever took an Indian station in hand.

Maritally she was in love with her husband, Jack; psychologically she was enamored of Philip Fleming's superb qualities. Quite honestly she determined to ameliorate his condition; and, diplomatically, she stirred the people into a ferment of discontent, to the end that the commissioner might be harassed into a properly amenable frame of mind.

Mrs. Rawlton had a sister within striking distance of Akyab. Had the other ladies known of this, they might not have labored so enthusiastically, nor blindly accredited her with disinterested motives until it was absolutely too late.

The sister, Mary Kelvey, was in Calcutta, and quite unaware of the endeavor of Mrs. Rawlton. Even when Mary stepped from the B. I. steamer to the pier in Akyab, and was whirled away in a high dogcart to her sister's bungalow, she was as innocent of the crusade as was Philip Fleming.

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Jack Rawlton was not in it with his clever wife at putting an ear to the palpitating breast of the future; but when she explained to him the utility of having a sister-in-law married to a man who would one day be chief commissioner, he could understand that much of diplomacy. After all, his rôle was a minor one. Mrs. Rawlton had no intention of allowing her big, blundering husband a chance to wreck the play.

The little stories of Philip Fleming's excellence, chiefly official, which Rawlton told at home, gained in sincerity from his awkward rendering.

Mary Kelvey's advent caused a renaissance in the dormant sentimental atmosphere of the station. She was beautiful, which was excuse enough for this change; and, in addition, new girls didn't fetch the Port of Akyab often. Every man possessed of legitimate right to fall in love with a woman (and some who weren't) cultivated Mrs. Rawlton. This phase of the case was absolutely innocuous; but when small, dark Laurence Herbert began to abstain from his forever and ever caustic epigrams, Mrs. Rawlton in defense was forced to confide to Molly that Philip Fleming was simply waiting his chance. Herbert was all very fine in the way of romance, but Mary hadn't come from Cal-

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cutta for romance; there was plenty of that in the City of Palaces.

Mary Kelvey had manifestly broken Herbert of his cynical inhumanity—which was a good thing for his friends; for him it was the Bastile. Four hundred rupees a month was the chain binding him to the rock of celibacy.

The sister saw to it that Mary viewed Philip Fleming's character in the purple and fine linen of wise interpretation, until the glamour of the real man crept into her understanding, as the droning of bees wafts soft music to ears lazy of sleep.

On Fleming's side potent influences were at work to enlarge the void in his life.

It is a tenet of faith held of the Anglo-Indians that ayahs always quiet their child charges with the black tears of the poppy—the little pellets of opium; and Mrs. Rawlton had this skeleton fear brought forth and made to dance in the mind of Philip Fleming. This was only one of the many things that, beyond doubt, shadowed the lives of the children unless they should acquire a European mother.

Also of Philip Fleming's self: paradoxically, the intensity of his official endeavor vacuated his mind, till in its exhaustion it clamored for refillment at the fount of sympathy. The club

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whist, the station dinners with their semiofficial chatterings, the vagaries of the opium-saturated Arakanese—all failed utterly by way of compensation.

Mrs. Rawlton's dominating influence forged a connecting link; and when Philip asked the beautiful girl, half his age, to become his wife, she answered as though there was no such thing as a negative in the philosophy of love.

The announcement set the station aghast, like the sweep of a cholera wave. Somehow they had been as one in their deductions as to Fleming's natural destiny: an official's widow, or maiden of his own age, forty, they had dedicated unanimously to the governing of Government House. Now the commissioner was to marry Mary Kelvey, still loitering in the spring-time of girlhood.

It would make quite a separate story to chronicle the gentle exhilaration of gossip, all full of regret, that once bitten was not twice shy with the commissioner.

What Mary said to her sister *is* of this story, for it was of the vital essence of the second crisis. "Cid, I said 'Yes,'" Mary confided to the Deputy Memsahib.

The sister kissed her, and said, "I'm very happy, Molly; Philip loves you."

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"He didn't say anything about it," Mary answered.

Mrs. Rawlton raised her eyebrows. "Philip didn't tell you he loved you?"

"Haven't you always glorified his great virtue of truth and honesty, Cid?"

"I don't understand?"

"Just that he has proven himself all that you say. He might easily have romanced about love; but he didn't. As I remember it, there was much talk of happiness, honor, and all that."

"Are you joking, Molly?"

"No; his declaration was in keeping with our very exalted opinion of him. Cid, I've a notion to back out. He doesn't love me a little bit; he just wants some one to mother the children. Oh, don't look frightened; the Kelveys never back out, once they pledge their word—that's the disadvantage of having family *esprit de corps!*"

"Molly, you're mistaken. Philip is one of those strong, self-contained men who feel a great deal more than they express."

"Yes, he's self-contained, Cid. But if I didn't actually believe that what you say is true, I shouldn't marry him. If I were rich or powerful, I wouldn't believe it. But he must care for

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me, to wish to make me his wife—don't you think so, sister? ”

Mrs. Rawlton saw it all. Fleming had worn that execrable armor of reserve, even in his love-making, and Mary was simply voicing the doubts which this had left in her mind. However, it would all come right, she knew.

They were married in the little English church that nestled in the mango tope like a quaint bloodstone. The bell clanged vociferously; the guests brought the diplomatic felicitations of higher culture; in fact, there was a brave attempt at making it a love feast.

But, somehow, the little god seemed to have wandered off into the jungle, or to have hidden himself in the pagan shrine that was a white-washed pagoda. Perhaps, even, he was down in the little bamboo hut where Shwebo, who had been married that same day, had taken Mindah, his bride. Shwebo was only a clerk in the *cutcherri*; so if Cupid really lingered with him, he was at best but a poor courtier.

Intention counts for little if everything in environment is an obstacle; and the church ritual seemed to have exorcised the sister's influence. Things drifted badly.

Disenthralled, Mary became a bondwoman to her distrust of Philip's love. His very solici-

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tude over the children thrust her from the inner circle of his heart; and the illogical fantasy that she was there simply as the keeper to the other woman's children grew oppressively huge in her mind.

Philip knew nothing of this. At first his hesitancy of expressed sentiment was of delicate forbearance—of his remembrance always that he was forty; oddly enough, his abnegating gentleness appealed to Mary as cold inconsideration. If he had really trusted more to the blind little god, the ways of fate would have been less troublous.

Something of his cleavage entered into the lives of the children. The boy spoke of the sleeping woman at Darjeeling as his mother, and with Madge, Mary was mother.

The dissension plant thrust its ugly blossom over the lattice of restraint until even the servants talked. They always do in India; but with the commissioner's servitors was a strange, weird tale that had come of the ayah's unwise tongue.

When the ayah first told of it in the cook house Abdul, the cook, laughed in derision. He was a Mussulman, having no truck with the devious ways of many gods; so he muttered "Allah," to himself, and aloud reviled the teller as a liar of much magnitude.

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"Listen, brother," cried the ayah, "if this is not a true saying, then may I have the sin to offend a Brahmin."

"Go on, tell us, garrulous one," sneered Abdul. "Here is Baloo the syce; perhaps he will also call thee a liar when thou hast finished, for Baloo believes nothing when he is sober, and everything when he is otherwise."

"It is of the Memsahib," began the ayah, drawing her muslin *serai* over her silver anklets.

"Then, indeed, it is a lie," declared Abdul, "for if ayahs were to tell the truth of their Memsahibs they would offend other than the Brahmins."

"Abdul, thou hast swallowed the carving knife. I speak not of the new Memsahib—no, it is of the Commissioner Memsahib that is dead at Darjeeling."

"Oh, indeed, it is a true tale," sneered Abdul; "of a dead woman there may be truth."

"What of the story," pleaded Baloo; "is it a new one?"

"Did I not always maintain that the Memsahib loved the *babas*?" began the nurse.

"She gave you a silver bangle, ayah," remonstrated Baloo.

"That she knew of," interjected Abdul; "ayah had other presents."

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The woman ignored the insinuation, and continued: "As I always said, she loved the little *babas*, and now—" the nurse leaned forward and whispered—"she comes at night and plays on the piano for them."

"How can one that is always asleep know these things?" objected Abdul.

"Twice have I found them slumbering by the piano," continued the ayah; "and when I asked of the little Sahib the why of it, he waxed cross and spoke ill of all Hindoos. But are they not my charge, the *babas*; so I watched, sitting behind a *pardah*—the new Memsahib was at a *burra khana*——"

"That is not news," exclaimed Abdul; "am I not forgetting my art through the cooking of no house dinners? I might as well be on circuit in the jungle."

"Have patience, cook," pleaded Baloo; "it is a good tale."

"The new Memsahib was at a *burra khana* as I watched," repeated the ayah, "and there was but the one oil lamp."

"Could you see the dead Memsahib?" queried Baloo.

"No; but I heard sweet music. And at once the *babas* came from their beds, where I had put them with such great care——"

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"Because of the silver bangle," interrupted Abdul.

"The *babas* sat by the piano, and the soft music was played by the Memsahib. Then the *Mehta* came blundering with a noise, and the *babas*, seeing me, scolded that I had driven away the little Sahib's mother. Is not that proof that what I say is true?"

"Did you tell master?" queried Baloo.

"No; why should I? The new Memsahib does not play for my little *babas*, and have I not said the mother loved them?"

"Certain it is a bad sign," declared the syce solemnly. "The new Memsahib will die, or perhaps it is the *babas*."

"It is not the little ones," retorted the nurse; "they have done nothing that is wrong."

"Still, ayah, perhaps the mother is coaxing them away."

It is because of ayahs that everything in India is known. An ayah tells an ayah, and sometimes that ayah whispers to her Memsahib. So the ghost tale came to the ears of Mary's sister. Mrs. Rawlton had seen with wise eyes the foolish discontent. Now it was time to take Mary in hand with decision; and she did.

"It's no use," the girl answered; "no woman

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could fall in love with Philip—he wouldn't allow it. I'm the second to discover that."

"Hush, Molly! You love him."

"Not a bit. Why should I?"

"You are tragically honest."

"Then I'm even with Philip. We are both honest; that's all there is to it. I'm there to look after the dead woman's children."

"Philip loves you, Molly."

"Cid, do you know what I think? I believe he's in love with Helen."

"She's dead."

"Perhaps that's why; a woman can't reason out a man's motives."

"You don't try to reason out Philip."

"It's unnecessary, Cid. I know he's all you claim for him. But a woman at twenty-two can't love a man simply because he is excellent in office, or approved of at his club. A girl wants love—the thousand and one things that Philip knows nothing of."

"You're just talking yourself into rebellion, Molly."

"I'm starving for sympathy, Cid. Can't you see what a desert I'm in, with its mirage of love. My soul is parched—I cry out, revolting myself for the falseness of my existence."

"Is it not as hard on Philip, Molly?"

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"No, he is content. His mind, full of the Oriental diplomacy, conceived this plan of getting a governess for his children. It is all 'the children' with him. The little sentiment he can find time for is theirs."

"I think you might make him love you."

"Cid, you treat the grand passion as a doctor would gout. You might write out a prescription: Honesty, five grains; position, ten grains; official capacity, twenty grains; mix, and it will induce love. But it's worse than the gout mixture, Cid. One can toss that horrible stuff through the window; the other remains in one's life for ever and ever."

"You are disloyal, Molly."

"No Kelvey was ever that."

"To yourself. If you continue like this people will talk."

"They always do; without this, or that, or anything, as excuse."

"But about Herbert, Molly."

The girl laughed. "Don't say commonplace things, sister; the half-castes in the Telegraph Service take that view of everything."

"He's always about."

"Naturally; he's in love with me, I fancy. If I had married him, I should probably be in love with him. I didn't; so I'm not."

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"I shall write to headquarters to have Herbert transferred to a place of hard work."

"You needn't trouble, Cid. Philip will soon see the hopelessness of it all, and I shall go away."

"You mustn't, Molly—you mustn't!" Mention of this dreadful alternative stirred Mrs. Rawlton to impatient strides up and down the room. "Did you ever hear of a Kelvey shirking her duty? Didn't Ned hold that stone *sangar* against the Afridis until—" she stopped and put her arms around the girl's neck, burying her face in her shoulder.

"Don't worry, Cid. I'll keep the Kelvey honor as bright as Ned did. But this is worse than holding a stone fort against Afghans. The house is haunted by the other woman's spirit; her presence is everywhere—was she a great musician, Cid?"

The sister started. "She was, Molly; but why do you ask?"

"I'll tell you. I know you'll call it morbid fancy, but it's not. When I touched the keys of the piano, *her* piano, a spirit wailed back at me from the chords. My fingers thrilled with its influence."

"Too much quinine, Molly; it gets on my nerves sometimes."

"No, Cid. I've heard soft music at night

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when there was nobody in the room. I know something dreadful will happen—I can feel it.”

“Take my advice, Molly—” Mrs. Rawlton shifted the subject quickly—“fall in love with the children.”

“I can’t. *She* stands in the way. With Roscoe it is all ‘my mother, my mother.’ If there was one soul that loved me, I shouldn’t mind; I’d try.”

“They all love you, Molly. Just wait patiently.”

“I’ll wait, but something will happen, I know it will.”

.

The wife’s prophecy of a happening materialized the next day.

The station men always dined together at the Gymkhana Club on Saturday night. This was Saturday, and the commissioner broke bread with his brother officials.

When he returned home he found Roscoe and Madge asleep in each other’s arms on the matted floor by the piano. In his astonishment he called sharply, “Mary!”

The ayah came from the servants’ quarters. “Call your Memsahib,” Philip commanded.

“Memsahib going to Dep’ty Memsahib’s bungalow,” the woman answered in confusion.

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Of the children the ayah knew nothing; the Sahib's fierce questions brought forth nothing. Of the spirit music she spoke not at all; nor of anything, but that she put the *babas* in their cots, and she was a poor woman that sometimes fell asleep on the veranda when saying her prayers.

Philip carried the children to their room; as his hand rested for an instant on the boy's forehead he found it hot. The sea night wind that always carried pestilential fever—why, no man can say—was blowing straight up the harbor neck between the lighthouse and Scandal Point, and, sweeping in through the open door, it had smitten the thin-clad lad as he slept and poisoned him.

Philip's heart in its anger grew as hot as the fevered brow of the boy. Molly's indifference to himself he could understand. He felt he was very much of a machine, an official plodder; the dust of the *cutcherry*, no doubt, had clogged the buoyant working of his mind until he was as hopelessly dull as the big alabaster image of Gaudama up at the pagoda.

But surely the children should have crept into her heart a little. Now one of them was stricken, and she, who should have been a mother to them, was away.

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"Sit here with the children, ayah, till I return," he commanded.

Passing out, he stood for a minute, an unutterable weariness of lonely feeling in his face, his eyes wandering over the big room. The dreariness of it struck into his heart.

Fronting the bungalow, the salt waters lapped and moaned as the fever wind drove them sluggishly up the flat beach. How different was his homecoming to what it might have been! That the fault was undoubtedly his, lessened not the aspect of desolation.

A tucktaw, somewhere in the leaf roof, echoed in dreary monotone the bitter cry that was in his soul. "Tucktaw, tucktaw!" Nine times Philip counted the lizard's grating cry; and then at the end, a long-drawn-out "Aw-w-w!" as if in derision of his futile longing for happiness.

A tucktaw was a harbinger of good fortune, in the belief of that land of beliefs. There had been one in the bungalow before Helen was kissed to sleep by the death angel; then it had gone away—at least this was the first time he had heard the dreary call for months. But there was little prospect of good fortune this forlorn night of the luck lizard's advent.

It was as though nothing slept; as though

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with darkness misery came down to earth and stalked gaunt, unsatisfied, rapacious of human housing. These fantastic voices of the night, striking with fierce sweep the tense heart chords of the listener, had stilled Philip to a moment of silent meditation.

Suddenly a sweet note fell upon the depressed man's ear. He turned his head sharply; he could have sworn it was from the piano. Something in the exquisite pathos of the low vibration echoed in his memory. In his young life, Helen's fingers used to wander over the keys idly, claiming from the chords a sweet response of sympathy. In those days, a rose blossom, a murmur of music, had fitted to their careless happiness.

He took an eager step and listened again. The adagio had ceased—there was nothing. It was as if his close presence repulsed all gentleness.

Down on the beach, silhouetted in the moonlight, he could see a pair of jackals wrangling discordantly over something the ebbing tide had stranded on the black sands.

Philip laughed in bitterness. Was not his life more like that—was not the soft music but the creation of his own yearning?

Impatient with himself, yielding again to new anger, he strode into the moonlight.

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As he passed down to the metaled road, the champacs stirred lazily in the fever wind, their white blossoms, yellow-hearted, revolting his tensioned spirit with their heavy, sensuous breath. Bah! They choked him—smothered him. He almost ran to the straight, broad road; then over its hard floor he swung with fierce stride, under the octopus limbs of the over-lacing banyans that threw weird serpentine shadows across his path. Somehow the fantastic night picture was one of Doré's *Inferno* conceptions.

Then the road dipped lower toward the sea beach, and the spirelike casarinas—wives of Neptune, that die from out his embrace—caught the whispering wind in their singing bows and wailed softly to the human that sped so swiftly at their knees.

Between two white pillars that looked like tombstones, Philip turned into the Rawlton drive; within the lighted bungalow he could see Mary—happy from out his presence.

Philip checked his eager way and gazed with hot eyes at a picture that seared his heart: beside his wife the lamplight limned in sharp-cut lines the face of Herbert.

This was why Mary had left the children to the ayah's care. More than once Philip had fancied a sense of uneasiness over Herbert.

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When the liveried *Durwan* stepped into the room and announced, "Commissioner Sahib hai!" Mrs. Rawlton could have risen in anger and grasped with strong hands the slender olive throat of Laurence Herbert—as appeal against the erratic cruelty of fate. His coming had been such a chance—a luckless chance. Fate, in the semblance of a pagan-tempered pony, had thrown Herbert to earth with such emphatic force that his battered nerves had shirked the club dinner, and to escape the desolation of his silent bungalow he had wandered over to the Rawltons.

In Philip's face Mrs. Rawlton read the anger of cumulative suspicion.

"I've come for you, Mary—Roscoe is ill," the commissioner said, with the slow drawl of a set purpose. For a moment Mary gave no sign; she was thinking that Philip's anger was for the neglect of the children, not because he had missed her. Mrs. Rawlton looked curiously from face to face. On Herbert's was a cynical look of amused pity.

Mrs. Rawlton spoke first, with decision, for she detected rebellion in her sister's face: "Come and get your wraps, Molly. Sit down for a minute, Philip."

In the room she spoke with large wisdom to

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the girl, saying over and over again: "Don't speak—don't utter a word, unless you say, 'I'm sorry.' Leave the matter of Herbert's being here to me—I'll settle that. Now go—quick!"

Mrs. Rawlton went with them to the tomtom.

As the gray Burma pony's small hoofs beat at the beach road with the rattle of a snare drum, the two angered ones sat upright and silent in the cart that slipped swiftly in and out the tunnels of banyan shade that were dark caverns in the moonlight.

Perhaps it would have been better had Philip talked to Mary then; for when he did give voice to his bitterness in the bungalow, the boy's fevered face had drawn his thoughts to the children again, and his strong complaint was of her evident lack of affection for them. If he had only spoken of his own loneliness—of a craving for her love—she would have rejoiced; but he was forever and ever relegating her to the position of a governess. That was her misconception; in reality he had come to look upon her love as too great a thing to ask. He also misunderstood. His age appalled him. He might have known that a girl of twenty could not come to love a man of forty, whose years of delving in dusty official records had made him old indeed.

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Not understanding each other, the foolish thought that they had blundered crept into their words, and they drifted in a sea of anger that set their life craft against a cleaving rock of destruction. Mary, possessed of the sin of impetuosity—which is a quick garner of evil results—picturing a false hopelessness of striving, asked Philip to let her go away. He, thinking she was utterly weary of him, consented.

When Mrs. Rawlton knew from Mary of this she writhed in hopelessness. It was the very emptiness of the quarrel that rendered her impotent; there was nothing tangible to go upon. How could a sane woman deal with fancies, or explain them away? It was all as clear as noon-day to her. Mary was practically jealous of a dead woman; that certainly was a fancy difficult to combat. She was jealous of the children; but to attempt to prove that Philip did not love the little ones would be absurd. Possibly the husband was jealous of Herbert; but as there was absolutely so little cause, Mrs. Rawlton could not even mention the subject without making trouble.

So she just sat still, after a little attempt at reason with Molly, and waited.

The boy's fever had been checked—he was almost well again—but still the quarrel was un-

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healed; Mary was to go to Calcutta by the first steamer.

Up to the very evening before steamer day Fate had shown no inclination to interfere. That evening the commissioner was suddenly called to Padouk. He went in his steam launch, and by traveling all night would return in the early morning before his wife departed. Mrs. Rawlton had Mary for the evening, and toiled without avail.

As the girl, leaving the sister's bungalow, turned her cart between the two white stones of the gateway the pony swerved and a man's voice came out of the darkness, saying, "Pull up, Molly—I want to talk with you."

She reined in her pony, and the syce caught him by the head. Herbert came forward and stood by the wheel. "Send Baloo ahead, Molly," he pleaded, "and walk home."

"I don't like it, Laurence."

"Just to say good-by," he begged; "it's the last time."

The girl descended, and the syce led the pony ahead of them.

"You shouldn't have waited for me," she said; "it's not right—I don't like it."

"It was a fluke, Molly—honest. I was going in to Rawlton's when I saw your trap. Your

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sister wiggled me for being there the other night.
Are you really going away, Molly? ”

“ To-morrow.”

“ Is it anything—am I to blame—did Philip——”

“ Nobody is to blame.”

“ You are coming back? ”

“ Never.”

“ What is to come of it, Molly? ”

The girl sighed wearily. “ I don’t know :

“ ‘ There is a door to which I find no key ;
There is a veil past which I cannot see.’ ”

They walked a little in silence, then Herbert added :

“ ‘ And is there talk awhile of me and thee ? ’ ”

“ No. ‘ No more of thee and me.’ ”

“ You are more cruel than the tentmaker—you harden his words.”

“ Omar was a Persian, and said more than he meant ; I am English, and say less.”

“ But has Philip decided on anything—are you to be free? ”

“ I am going away—that is all ‘ between thee and me,’ Laurence ;

“ ‘ The stars are setting and the Caravan
Starts for the Dawn of Nothing——.’ ”

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"It is dark going, Molly."

"Yes; but it is darker staying."

They were at the gate. The syce had gone on to the stable; and the two went in between the opium-breathed champacs, the mottled-leafed crotons brushing the girl's cheek as she walked, like fingers of remonstrance touching her in a friendship of caution.

"When you are free, Molly—" Herbert began; but she stopped him, interrupting, "I am not free, Laurence; I am Philip Fleming's wife."

"I haven't forgotten that, Molly. You needn't caution me. Fleming is your husband, and he's my friend; that's the bitter part of it. When we dine together at the gym we eat the same salt, and I'm bound to a rock of despair like Prometheus——"

"You should bind your tongue, Laurence; you shouldn't say these things to me."

"There is no sin in actuality; I suffer the most over it. You don't love him—you are going away. When you are free, Molly——"

They were at the bungalow veranda. The girl slipped up the steps, and reached down her hand. "Good-by, Laurence," she said softly; "you must stop even thinking of me."

He followed, clinging to the small white hand.

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"Molly," he whispered, "can't I wait? Tell me"—he was at her side.

Suddenly a soft strain of music stole between the *purdah* and the door casement. Herbert felt the hand he held tremble. Involuntarily, on tip-toe, they stole to the curtained door. Just as they gained it Herbert's foot struck a chair and it clattered.

Then a boy's voice came to their ears, saying: "Don't jump, Madgie; it's father's topee blown from the rack again—it's always tumbling."

"I don't tare; it's mean. Now your mudder'll doe away, and we'll has to doe to bed, 'tause there's no moosic. I wish *my* mudder's tum home, tause I'se so sleepy."

Herbert felt the girl at his side shiver.

"Let's go to bed, Madgie," the boy pleaded.

"No, I'se doin' to wait for my mudder; I wants a tiss."

"I wish my mother would kiss me, but she jes' plays for us, cause she's dead and can't come to kiss us. Your mother is going away to Calcutta, Madgie, and then you won't have any mother."

"No; she's not."

"Yes, ayah told me."

"Den I'll doe, too."

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"I won't," replied the boy sturdily. "Your mother doesn't love me. I don't believe she loves you, Madgie, 'cause she never plays for us."

"She tisses me sometimes, Ross. Folkses don't tiss you ef dey doesn't love you."

"She's nice when she stays with us," offered the boy in the way of reparation.

"She doesn't stay much with papa, neever; but papa loves her, and tourse she loves him, tourse everybody does."

"Come to bed, Madgie; I'm awful sleepy. Papa'll be cross if he catches us here again."

"I'se going to wait for my mudder; I want a tiss."

Herbert felt a small hand catch him by the arm, and he was drawn silently along the veranda, and down the steps until he stood beside the crotons.

"Good night, Laurence," the girl said, holding out her hand.

"When you go away, Molly——"

"I'm not going—you are; Cid is going to have you transferred."

"Have me—what?"

"Can't you understand? Did you hear nothing? Don't you think God put the little children there to talk to us?"

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Herbert's head drooped. "Good-by, Molly," he said; "you are a brave little woman—I was a coward; you are right."

"I was also a great coward, Laurencé, seeing evil shadows where there was only light. See how foolish I was—such a trivial thing has opened my eyes. Cid was going to send you away for my sake, but that was nonsense, Laurence. For your own sake I think you had better go. Good night; Madge is waiting for her kiss—good-by."

He touched the hand he held with his lips, and went out through the riotous perfume of champac to the metaled road that was dreary in its hardness.

The girl passed swiftly along the veranda. As her heels clicked on its hard floor she heard Madge's voice cry out: "Wait, Ross; here tums my mudder; wait 'til I det a tiss."

What had come over her mother, Madge wondered; a thousand kisses lay upon the lips and eyes and cheeks; and hot tears rained upon the little face, and damped the curls.

"Div Ross some, too, mudder," the child pleaded; "Ross is awful lonesome because he tan't det no tiss from his mudder. You ain't doin' away, mudder, is you? Ross told a fib dus to tease, didn't he?"

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"No, Madgie, little sweetheart, I'm going to stay with you and papa."

"Ross is a naughty boy to tell fibs," commented Madge. "Don't div him a tiss 'less he says he's sorry."

What a happy going to bed the little ones had! It was like a trip into a fairyland of love out of a desolate desert of neglect; their eyelids closed with the pressure of mother lips, and gentle hands that tucked them in with tender care.

As they slumbered Mary sat wide-eyed in the new waking; and walked the floor, and stole on tiptoe many times to their cots. The hours were ages; the night a span of life; even time seemed to sleep while Mary, incapable of rest, awaited the coming of Philip.

What would he say? In her own joyous transition she had not thought of this.

After long spaces of time she cast herself, dressed as she was, upon a couch, and tried to sleep. She must have dozed. She found herself standing on the floor with an echo of music in her mind. Had she dreamed it? But it was terribly real—it was ghostly.

The light was breaking. She went out from the bungalow and paced with sentinel tread the red rubble drive. The breath of dawn was per-

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fumed from the gentle kiss of jasmine. From down the road a whirl of rapid wheels came to the girl's ears; it would be Philip. She went inside and waited. As Philip came into the bungalow she stepped forward, and stood looking at him in silence.

"You are up early, Mary," he said.

"I haven't been in bed."

"What! And going on a journey?"

"I'm not going, Philip."

"You're not—" he stopped and looked at her as though he had not heard aright.

"I want to—stay with you, and—the children—if you—if you wish it." She spoke with slow, timid emphasis. "I was wrong about my own feelings—I couldn't understand—I thought no one loved me here, but Madge does; and if you—" The girl stopped, lamely, trying to say what was in her heart.

Philip knew he should answer—should say something; but bells were ringing in his ears; queer jumbled words, inanely empty, were confusedly rampant in his mind. He did just the wisest thing; he put his big strong arms about the stammering girl, and said: "Hush! Don't say anything more. I thought the bungalow looked so dreary in the gray morning; and now O God, I am happy!"

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When the love god sits between two people, holding their hands, all troubles are brushed away with the fairy wand of trust. And in all the girl's story of the night there was but one troublous thing—the weird music, for Philip himself had known of it.

But the piano was forced to give up its secret. When Philip, in the way of investigation, removed the front, a silly mouse, that had built a nest within, of the felt and strings, startled by the light, clattered up the vibrant wires and scuttled across the floor.

MAHNET

PHOBAB was king of the Yenan district. Yenan is halfway from Rangoon to Mandalay, in British territory; and Phobah was only a dacoit, yet he was king of the district. He took toll in rice or rupees or heads; or sometimes in all three, just as it pleased his pagan fancy.

Langworth was superintendent of police and acting magistrate at Yenan.

Phobah had the regular knight-of-the-road chivalry; he seized the goods of the rich, and when he had more than enough for himself and his merry men, he gave to the poor.

The police were handicapped. No man came forth and told where Phobah was in hiding—the rich man because he was afraid of losing his head, and the poor man because Phobah fed him when he was hungry. All the same, this bandit king took a regular dacoit's delight in killing people who incurred his enmity.

If Phobah was king of the jungles, his sister, Mahnet, was queen of the village.

When Langworth first went to Yenan, no

MAHNET

Europeans lived there, and the air, that was empty of everything but the taint of natives, hung heavy on his soul.

That was why Phobah's sister, Mahnet, who was really pretty, appeared more beautiful than anything else in the world—meaning, of course, the Yenan world.

Burma is not as conventional as Belgravia—not openly, at any rate; so Mahnet rolled cheroots for Langworth, and wove jasmine flowers in her hair, and put the golden-hearted champac blossoms in her ears, and wore the sky-colored silk putsoes daintily and coquettishly, and glazed the olive and rose of her cheek with sandalwood powder, all for the sake of the smart police officer who talked gently to her with his full rich English voice.

If Mahnet was pretty, Langworth was handsome. The cavalry officer's beauty he had; tall and lithe and agile, blue eyes and blond hair, and the square, sun-browned jaw that made strong setting for the man beauty that was in the face.

It was a cheap little heaven that Mahnet had; just to sit there and watch this man god through the rings of curling smoke, and sometimes to catch the music of his laughter as he chaffed her.

But one thing bothered Mahnet. Phobah,

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who was her brother, was a dacoit, a bad dacoit, on whose head there was a price; and some day this god thakine, the superintendent, would go out with his soldier police after him, and there would be a fight.

Twice Langworth went out with his Punjabi police after the dacoit chief; but they saw only the trail of the serpent—the blackened iron-wood posts of the bamboo houses he had burned. There were no fights, neither were any dacoits captured.

So in Yen-an itself there was much peace right up to the day Padre Hoskins came with his mission.

Now Padre Hoskins knew of the home history of Langworth; he knew there were broad acres and a manor house; also the prospect of a title, with only two lives between.

So, while Langworth watched for a chance to land Phobah, and incidentally attended to routine matters, Padre Hoskins set himself the task of putting the superintendent's household gods in order.

Once started in that direction, Hoskins worked with feverish intentness. This intentness woke Langworth up—it was like playing a hose on a light sleeper. He had not thought of all the things the padre discussed with him in a seem-

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ingly disinterested manner. If he had thought of them at all, it was only in a nebulous way; the only concrete thing in the whole bag of tricks was Mahnet, and she was pleasant.

Hoskins was a past master at mental manipulation, and the tall dacoit fighter was no match for him at that game. Even Mahnet couldn't help him a bit, though she knew what was going on.

But though Langworth was outclassed at this mental fencing, yet he was as bull-headed as—as—well, an Englishman. Hoskins could see that, or rather feel it.

An inspiration came to him. He must have reënforcements; that was the key to the whole situation—he must have a woman to play off against Mahnet. So he sent to Rangoon for his niece, Florence, to come to Yenan to help him in his “missionary work.” If Hoskins had not been a padre, he would have smiled a little when he wrote that—“missionary work.”

Mahnet knew why the white girl had come: just as the native news carriers beat out the telegraph, Mahnet's subtle Oriental mind discovered this fact long before Langworth had the least suspicion of it.

“Does my lord like the English lady?” she asked Langworth.

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“ Yes; she’s a ripping fine girl! How do you like her swagger frocks, Mahnet? Better than putsoes, aren’t they? ”

These were things for Mahnet to think over—slowly, dreamily, in a proper Burmese manner, so she said nothing. And at the end of some of the thinking, Mahnet did a proper silly thing: she had some dainty muslin dresses made, and in anger stripped from the bronze, statue-like limbs the clinging silk folds of the graceful putsoe, and imprisoned them in the skirts that were like the English lady’s.

Of course she couldn’t eradicate all the grace that had come from years of freedom of limb, but she went a long way toward it; and this little false play, trifling as it seemed, did considerable toward the realization that the padre had been working for. It was the illustration that went with his story of the incompatibility of this sort of thing in England.

With the reënforcements thrown into the field, the padre commenced to score. The sight of Florence’s English face and high-bred manner reawoke the “ caste ” that had been bred in the bone of Langworth’s English home life.

Florence, to do her justice, knew nothing about this—that was why it was so effective; she was natural, and liked Langworth.

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A man couldn't fight against all this, so in the end the padre won, and Langworth became engaged to Miss Florence.

So Mahnet spent most of her time now at her father's little bamboo house, because her lord wished it. And Langworth spent most of his time thinking out futile little schemes for breaking off the thing effectually: a trip to Darjeeling would perhaps be the best way, with a substantial recompense to Mahnet for her disappointment.

Then suddenly, one sultry night, Ragathu, who was a village woon, came to the superintendent and whispered in fear that Phobah was hidden in the Zealat jungle, close to Ragathu's village. His villagers had captured one of the dacoits, named Yaman, and Ragathu had brought him to Yenan.

The dacoit was marched before Langworth. A proper cocoanut-headed villain he was. On his legs, from knee to hip, was much barbarous tattooing in blue and red; snakes and big-tusked dragons fought each other on the great muscles of his sturdy thighs. The scar of a dahcut traced its unpleasant length down his cheek from ear to mouth.

"Judging from the specimen," Langworth remarked, "I should say they were a pretty tough

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gang. No wonder you villagers drop your guns and run, if they're all as hideous as this gentle creature. What does he say for himself, Ragathu?"

"He says, thakine, that if you will not take away his life, nor send him off to the Devil Island, where the Government puts the dacoits, he will show where Phobah and his jackals are hiding."

"I thought so; he looks a proper traitor. He ought to be shot out of hand. But Phobah is worth a bigger price than this sneak's useless life. Tell him that if he keeps his word, I'll try to get a pardon for him. But mark you, Ragathu, if I see anything suspicious, I'll kill him as I would a cobra. I don't want my Punjabis led into a trap. How far is it to the dacoit's camp? Ask him."

"Four hours, thakine, he says."

"Well, we had better nab Phobah to-night, then; he'll be gone in the morning."

Yaman was closely guarded, and the sergeant of police given orders to line up fifteen picked Punjabis and get ready for a start immediately.

Mahnet had heard that one of Phobah's men was at Langworth's bungalow, so she had come down to hear if evil had befallen her brother. Sitting out on the veranda, she had heard all

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this talk, the bamboo walls were so thin—not thick enough to keep this misery from her heart. What a black cloud it was!—at last somebody would be killed!

She sat huddled up on the floor, her face buried in the arms folded across the knees, the silly muslin dress drinking greedily the tears that dropped from the big dark eyes. She was thinking, thinking, thinking. Phobah would be killed, or Langworth thakine would be killed.

Suddenly she raised her head. Buddha would help her do that, help her prevent the killing.

Yaman had been left in the bungalow, handcuffed to a policeman, while Langworth arranged for his men over at the *thanna*. Mahnet went in to where the dacoit and his guard were. "Quick, brother," she said in Yaman's jungle speech; "where is Phobah?"

"What are you saying?" asked the Punjabi, for he did not understand the language.

"I am asking how many men Phobah has with him," she replied, with Oriental diplomacy.

"At the white pagoda that is where the *nullah* crosses the road from Zealat to Minbu," answered Yaman; and his red and yellow eyes lighted up furtively.

"What does he say?" asked the policeman, suspiciously.

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"He says Phobah has many men, and that the police must go very slowly and carefully, because the guns are always watching at the little path that leads through the jungle."

Then Mahnet went out and sped swiftly down into the village to her father's house, where lived Lathu, her young brother.

"Lathu! Lathu!" she called softly, just at the foot of the teak-wood steps.

Lathu came down from the little house, his sandals knocking irritably at the hard wood of the primitive stairway. "What is it, little sister?" he asked.

"Phobah is at the Zealat pagoda, and the thakine is going out with the police. O Lathu, somebody will be killed!"

"It is four hours there," said Lathu, plaintively.

"You are afraid, then," sneered Mahnet, drawing back disdainfully.

"I will go," answered Lathu, with decision; "but Phobah must go away—he must not shoot at the police."

"Yes; tell him that Mahnet says he must not shoot at the police, because the thakine is Mahnet's brother."

Over the government road that led to Ragathu's village, tramp, tramp, tramp, with the

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stately military tread of soldier-bred Punjabis, the fifteen tall policemen marched through the thick, sensuous gloom of the Burmese night. At their head rode the superintendent on his gray Pegu pony, and between him and the policemen was Ragathu, the sergeant, and Yaman.

At Ragathu's village they halted for a rest. It was twelve o'clock. The Pegu pony was left at the village, and the brown figures of Langworth and his men, with soft muffled steps, melted into the deep shadow of the Zealat jungle. In front of the column marched Langworth and the sergeant; between them the dacoit guide, Yaman.

Down the Minbu road they moved softly, silently. The Punjabis had slipped off their big loose sandals and shoved them into the khaki blouses. The order for silence had been passed, and no one spoke—no one whispered.

At the *nullah* that cut its little gorge across their way, Yaman touched Langworth on the arm, and they halted. With his lips close to the ears of the sergeant he whispered something. The sergeant spoke to Yaman, so low that no one heard. Then he put his face close to the superintendent's. "He says," whispered the sergeant, "that a path on the other bank of the *nullah* leads down to the white pagoda, that is

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in a thick jungle of bamboos. Beyond the pagoda Phobah has a stockade."

"When we come to the pagoda," whispered back Langworth, "take six police and work around the back to cut off their retreat. I will charge them from in front. They will be sleeping, and we'll bag the lot."

He touched Yaman, and the party moved down into the dark bottom of the *nullah*, over the little bridge, and up on the farther bank. They turned sharp to the left along the narrow ribbon of the jungle-hid path; they could only walk two abreast.

Suddenly something rustled the hanging leaves of the drooping bamboos on their right. Langworth cocked his revolver and half-turned. Then they moved forward again.

As they started, a sharp bird-whistle sounded at Langworth's elbow; he could have sworn it was Yaman giving a signal a step behind him. Wheeling like a flash he stretched out his hand for the dacoit's throat. His fingers clutched the sergeant—Yaman had gone.

Then again that sharp hissing note sounded from the jungle on their left.

"Forward! Quick march!" he commanded.

Too late. Hell belched forth; its hot breath scorched their faces. The sergeant

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pitched forward on his head—shot through the heart.

Langworth felt a pair of red-hot pincers grab the tendons of his right arm, and tear them down, down to the elbow. The arm hung useless as a withered leaf—a slug had shattered the bone. And something was ripping at his breast with a knife or a jagged nail; it seared his flesh and clutched at his lungs—they were choking.

A glaring flame darted out and withered his cheek; the light was burned out of his eyes.

The leaderless Punjabis were charging like madmen through the jungle; firing, and mixing up indiscriminately with spearlike bamboos that had been planted in a bayonet wall about Phobah's nest. But after the first volley Phobah and his men had melted into the waste of darkened jungle. Pursuit was useless.

Tenderly the baffled police picked up their fallen leader and the sergeant, and started back dejectedly over the road to Ragathu's village. There a *charpoy* was improvised as a litter, and with swinging tread the silent men bore Langworth to Yen-an.

Mahnet had been waiting like a frightened bird for the police to come back out of the jungle.

"The sahib will die," said the Punjabi *Naik*,

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who was in charge since the sergeant's death. "Somebody betrayed us to Phobah; his men shot from the jungle before we came to the pagoda, and the sergeant is already dead. The sahib will die also; because there is nobody here but the guru sahib, who is a fool, and knows only to pray. The doctor sahib is at Minbu, which is twenty miles, and so our captain will die."

Now Langworth had a race pony, and in three minutes Mahnet was galloping on the road to Minbu. In an hour and a half she was there; and the civil surgeon, who was a Bengali baboo, was having it explained to him that if he did not go quick to Yenan, Phobah, the dacoit, would crucify him to please Mahnet.

So in three hours more, just as the blare-faced sun was slipping down behind the Yomas, the baboo was picking twisted slugs from the torn holes that were in Langworth's arms and chest and legs.

"He will die," said the baboo, cheerfully, with soulless brevity, "because of the proper shooting of the dacoits. What can I, who am but a civil surgeon, do, when the fusillade had been conducted with such commendable precision? Also are the damn slugs corkscrewed into him with beastly sinuosity.

"In the morning he will be defunct; there-

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fore you must arrange about some futurity matters, because the demise may be accelerated at any time. Also do not keep the lamp here, for optical inflammation has transpired on account of Phobah's short aim."

The prodding by the doctor was a terrible ordeal; like the attack in the jungle, it ended in chaos for Langworth.

"He is weak; we must give him stimulants," said the Bengali.

A little rest, a little of the doctor's prescription, and the battered man's senses came back. When he awoke, the padre was beside his cot.

"Bad business, eh?" said Langworth, feebly. "What does the baboo think of it?—not that he's much of a judge."

Hoskins hesitated a little, and looked troubled.

"Bad as that, eh?" queried Langworth.

"Yes, it's terrible!" answered the padre, in a trembling voice. "The baboo's afraid that something may happen internally at any moment. He has suggested, and it would perhaps be as well, that you arrange any worldly matters in case his fears turn out to be well grounded."

The wounded man was silent for a few minutes, save for a sharp, pained gasp that caught him at intervals. Then he spoke brokenly, with

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a strange mixture of petulant humor and seriousness:

"The baboo's an ass—always was; but I'm afraid he's right this time; it's usually big odds the other way. I'm not going to give up—that's no good; but still we'd better fix things a bit, if you'll help. Oh, hang it! I shouldn't mind if I'd bagged that beast Phobah, and hadn't lost the sergeant—poor devil! I wonder who sent the dacoits word we were coming? I'd like to know that.

"There's a bit of land at home, and if I don't fix it, Basil—you remember him—deuced bad lot—will come in for it, and make ducks and drakes of the whole business. It wouldn't do him a bit of good either—wouldn't last long. We must save the acres so they'll be of benefit to somebody who deserves it. It's about time I did something decent. Would Florence mind if we were married to-night?"

"Robert—" commenced the padre, distressedly.

"Don't bother!" broke in Langworth, petulantly. "If the baboo's right, I'll snuff out by morning, so don't upset what ought to be, because of form scruples. Send for Florence, that's a good man. She won't mind if I'm torn up a bit. Afterward you must fix up the papers

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leaving everything to her—bar a thousand pounds for Mahnet; she deserves something, too—I'm afraid I've treated her beastly bad. Now hurry this up and don't bother, for it's slippery going, and I may take a header at any moment."

The padre stepped out on the back veranda and called the orderly. "Bring the memsahib, quick," he said. "Your captain's order."

Then he went back and sat beside Langworth, and waited. Presently a step sounded on the graveled road at the veranda. She had come.

The padre rose and went to the door. He could see the shadowy figure of the girl in the dusk of the gathering night. "Come here, my dear," he said, softly; "Robert wants you."

As she came forward in the gray of the unlighted room, droopingly, he whispered: "He wishes to make you his wife to secure the property for you. He is dying, poor fellow. It is bitterly hard to be cut off in his prime by those treacherous murderers, but it seems like the Master's will."

Then he stepped up to the cot, and bent over the man lying there with his eyes bandaged. "She has come," he said, softly. "Shall we proceed with the ceremony; is it really your wish?"

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"Yes; hurry up, or we may be short a bridegroom," answered Langworth. "Come here, little woman. Deuced good of you to come. Sorry I can't see you; my eyes are bunged up."

The girl slipped to her knees beside the figure, which was almost swallowed up in the shadow of the coming night. The wounded man heard the soft rustle of the dress, and stretched his left hand gropingly toward her. She caught the hand in both her own, and covered it with sobbing kisses. The hot tears scalded it.

"Don't cut up, girl," said Langworth. "I think I'll pull through in spite of the baboo and Phobah; but we've got to do this thing for fear of accidents, you know."

"Shall we go on without a light?" asked the padre; "the baboo has forbidden one in the room."

"Yes," answered Langworth. "I like the gloom—it rests me."

Impressively the tall, slender padre, with strained voice, repeated the solemn sentences which joined them together till death should them part. Only a few hours at the most, perhaps a few minutes, it might be till the parting would come.

"Now, girl," said Langworth, when the padre ceased speaking, "I'm glad that is set-

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tled. We must make a strong fight to get over these cuts. You'll be all right at home if I don't pull through."

It was a strange marriage—pluck and misery, and perhaps just a little worldly satisfaction on the part of Padre Hoskins to relieve his genuine sorrow at the almost certain loss of a friend.

"It doesn't seem very regular," said the clergyman, as he thought canonically of the usual routine, "but the circumstances must be considered."

"It's all right," answered Langworth, wearily; "I'm glad I pulled through it. Give me a drink, please. Hurry the papers—they'll need my name to them."

"You'll remain with your husband, my dear, until I return," said the padre, softly. "I'll send the doctor to help you with Robert."

As he stepped off the veranda hastily he fairly ran into somebody.

"O uncle!" a frightened voice exclaimed; "you nearly knocked me down. I came over to see how Mr. Langworth is. The doctor says he is dangerously wounded."

Hoskins stood petrified with astonishment for an instant; then he spoke in a voice of wonder: "You—you—Florence? You—weren't—in the room just now?"

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“Why, no, uncle; I’ve just come from the bungalow.”

“My God! whom, then, have I married to Robert?” as a horrible suspicion flashed through his mind. “It must be—the—other—Mahnet.”

He turned and passed quickly to the door of Langworth’s room. Just inside he stopped, awed by the sight of a blurred picture.

Drooping over the cot in broken misery was the slight figure of the woman he had joined in marriage to the dying man. The unwounded left arm was thrown about her neck. The hush of the little room was broken by plaintive sobs, and a man’s voice was saying: “It’s a terrible mix-up, Mahnet—why did you do it, girl? I can’t blame you, though. It seems like fate. You can’t beat out fate—nobody can.”

It seemed to the listener that there was more of resignation than regret in the voice. And Mahnet was sobbing.

The padre turned, and taking Florence gently by the hand, said, “Come home with me, dear; I will come back to Robert presently.”

In the morning Langworth was still alive—and that night—and the next morning; and as the days went by he grew stronger and stronger, and Mahnet nursed him back to life. The doc-

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tor said it was the nursing that pulled him through.

Only the light that had been scorched out of the eyes never came back; and the right arm was gone. But Mahnet didn't mind that; she was happy.

Afterward the padre learned that Mahnet had come into her own innocently enough; it was his amateur Hindoostanee that was at fault. He should have said, "Bring the Missie Baba," not the "memsahib." Then the orderly would not have gone for Mahnet, thinking the padre wanted her.

FINNERTY OF THE ELEPHANT KEDDAH

SOME day a man will come out of India and write a book about Major Finnerty of the Elephant Keddah. Then this story will be last in the book, because of the thing that is in the story.

The "Major" was Finnerty's "ranking," for he had been out of the regiment since he was a sub-lieutenant.

Finnerty was the strongest man in the Indian Service; and sober his strength was a forbearing delight; drunk he was a tribulation. Liquor floated his mentality to some inner dead sea of oblivion, and his physical force guided him illogically, a rampageous gorilla.

Knowing of this thing himself, and in awe of the blank anger of the Sircar, he stuck to *pina-k-pani* (water) in the the jungle; leaving the other till he got his month of leave in Calcutta.

The Keddah Sahib's renown had gone from Manipur to Herat, and from Simla to Cape Comorin. Punjabi wrestlers came from the "Land of the Five Rivers," and wept with joy

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when they looked at the six-foot-three Irishman. They stroked his huge muscles lovingly, and exclaimed "Wah-wah!" Then, when they had been thrown, they would go back to their own caste, and tell of the one sahib that should have been a Sikh Rajah. That was Finnerty of the Elephant Keddah.

And Chota Moti was a grunty little babe elephant that Finnerty had captured in the As-sam jungles.

Out of consanguinity of temperament these two took to each other like blood relatives. For a year Finnerty made a pet of Chota Moti; and then the official who writes on paper what is to be done with the Government's elephants passed an order that Chota Moti, being useless for work, should be sold with other cast animals. Wilson, the circus man, bought the babe, and she passed from Dhuttaghur to a canvas home on the big *maidan* in Calcutta. Then when the hot weather blew its sirocco breath across the City of Palaces, the viceroy and the sahibs trooped up to the Himalayas, and the circus folded its tent and stole away to Australia.

The going of Chota Moti from Dhuttaghur left a blank in the life of the Keddah Sahib. If he could have filled the void with some strong essence of forgetfulness, he might not have

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missed the little *hathi* so much, but he dare not even smell the stuff—it would have led to slaughter; for Dhuttaghur and natives and elephants and delirium-laden jungle fever wasn't Calcutta and the white men of his own caste, by any means.

In September Finnerty read in the *Calcutta Asian* that the circus was daily expected from Australia. Then the devil of restlessness drew at the soul of the Irishman, till he became like a *muggar* that forsakes his pool in the Ganges and travels far across land.

“Faith, I can't stand it,” he growled. “I'll go *kharab* (bad) if I stay here.”

He applied for leave, and when it came passed with celerity from Dhuttaghur to the city of rejuvenation.

“Now, my little pig-squeaker, I'll feed you nuts and taparees till your sides bulge,” Finnerty muttered, as he donned clean raiment in his room in the Great Eastern Hotel. Then he drove to the *maidan*. The green sward stretched away in unbroken flatness to the escarpment of Fort William; no flag-topped, white-walled tent met the Keddah Sahib's eyes; the circus had not arrived; there was no little trumpet of welcome for Finnerty from Chota Moti.

But Calcutta was not Dhuttaghur, and there

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was the other thing to be had, the solace of many pegs. So the Keddah Sahib became one to avoid.

It was all play, for no man might speak out of his memory that he had seen Finnerty cross. But such play! Torn coats and bruised limbs are jokes to read about, not to come by. Because of his giant strength, no man showed anger to the Keddah Sahib, and Finnerty held anger against no man.

The trouble commenced over a new sahib; one who had lately come to Calcutta, and knew not of Finnerty and his ways. He was a seller of wares from Birmingham, and every man in that town thinks he can box. So Hamerton put himself on guard when Finnerty, with his huge arms spread, swept through the café tiffin room in a friendly charge. The sahibs that knew ducked and scuttled and laughed and swore, and it was fun—for Finnerty. The drive proceeded with exuberant success till the man from Birmingham stood in the way.

“Ay, there, me 'earty,” he called warningly, as his fists swung into proper pose.

Finnerty stared. Was there ever such luck? He rubbed his eyes doubtingly. Here was a man inviting a grapple. Not since the Keddah

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Sahib had grassed the last Punjabi had he felt the joyous thrill of straining muscles against his chest. The sahibs of Calcutta were weaklings that fell away in disordered limpness from the clutch of his brawny hands.

"Hivins! but you're a darlin'!" cried Finnerty in his exuberant joy. "I could love you, man; it's a bottle of Simpkin we'll be havin' presently. In the meantime, look out, me buck, I'm chargin'——"

'For they call it liminade in Ballyhooly.'"

The "Ballyhooly" was like the trumpet of one of his own elephants; indeed, Finnerty's rush was entirely like that, and the Birmingham gent was seized by the vest, and the upper story of his trousers, swung from his feet, lifted to the end of the long tiffin table, all set for lunch, and then the table was swept from end to end. Mul-ligatawny and beer and claret and Worcester sauce and many other liquids formed a lake on the marble floor that was pebbled with fragments of bottles and broken dishes.

"Now, me darlin'," cried the author of the mischief, "we'll drink a bottle of wine to show there's no ill will."

The merchant's white suit was gaudy with

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the purple stain of claret and the bilious green of mulligatawny; and his hair held curry, and there was Worcester sauce in his eyes, and the breath was all out of his body. So, to the Keddah Sahib's astonishment, he walked sulkily out of the room, turning at the door to curse the man who had made a crumb-brush of his body.

Finnerty turned in disgust to look for sympathy. The tiffin room was empty; he stood like the bull in the china shop, all alone in the *débris*. He looked admiringly at the desolate table and the wrecked dishes; then he whistled softly, and sang:

“When the glory's painted up,
What's the tally in the bloody heap of slain?
Now you're drunk, you Irish pup,
And you'll never get your stripes no more again.
For the Limericks are rough—very rough.”

He looked around the tiffin room; its emptiness held no promise of entertainment; its stillness oppressed him. He passed along the hall and up to the billiard room humming:

“When the singing cable's fed
With the tally of the awful Butcher's Bill,
In their sabered tunics, smeared with dirty red,
Count the Irish on the crest of every hill;
For the Limericks are dead—mostly dead.”

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As he entered the room two sahibs laid their cues on the table, took their helmets, and slipped through the other door.

The Irishman looked at the button-strung wire over the table. The score showed that the sahibs had left their game half-finished. On a side table stood two glasses, half-full.

Finnerty laughed; then he stretched his huge form in a chair and ordered a bottle of "Monopole."

"Faith, it's too bad entirely," he muttered; "sure I'd like to split this bottle with that gentleman of the zebra coat."

As the Keddah Sahib drank, a hotel *peon* appeared, and, salaming deeply, handed him a note. It was a bill for sixty-eight rupees breakage.

"Sure, *shikarri* comes high in Calcutta," Finnerty remarked, as he scrawled his signature across the bill and passed it to the *peon*.

Before he had emptied his glass a private servant appeared with another missive. It was a request that Mr. M. J. Finnerty would send by bearer twenty-four rupees, value of a suit he had ruined.

The Keddah Sahib laughed. "Faith, that's rich," he muttered. "The bounder must be a professional; he wants pay for an amateur bout."

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Finnerty tore the note and threw it at the servant, intimating that he and his master might take a trip to a worse climate than Calcutta. The native disappeared. And presently the khitmutghar handed to Finnerty a third neatly folded sheet of paper. This was distinctly discourteous in tone; it intimated that M. J. Finnerty was a man of low caste; that he had struck the writer's servant; that he had been rude to the sahib himself; that he had committed an assault; that he had refused to pay a legitimate charge for damages sustained and that now he was about to be punished.

"Och, the darlin'," Finnerty murmured; "I'm in luck—me, that was so lonesome. Och, I'm happy entirely. He'll be spankin' Finnerty—the darlin'!"

The beady champagne boiled up in the Irishman and threw a vapor of ecstasy to his brain. He sang softly: "Oh, the fightin' boys that come from Limerick, from Limerick, from Limerick!" Then he called: "Here, khitmutghar, bring me the toy man that fetched this chittie—I'll be givin' him a rupee."

"That bearer he's plenty much 'fraid, Hu-zoor."

"Faith, I'll not touch him. Sure, I'm a mem-sahib, I'm that gentle—just holdin' meself for

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what's to come. Stand him by the door there till I make *bat* (talk) with him; then you'll be givin' him this rupee."

By the persuasiveness of silver the servant was coaxed to the door, and Finnerty made the *bat*, which was:

"Give your sahib my salams, and tell him that I'll be waitin' in room seven, on the second floor, just dyin' with the joy of seein' him. Tell your master that Finnerty Sahib is just dyin' to be punished—altogether hungry for it."

The servant slipped away; the Keddah Sahib finished his wine, and, more or less troubled by its wavering influence, passed to the second floor, muttering, as he went: "Oh, but I ought to telegraph to Healey at Dhuttaghur that I'm goin' to be chastised!"

Down the dim corridor Finnerty swung, full of the exhilarating prospect ahead of him. He pushed back the *pardah* of a doorway and passed into the room. Had he looked at the number he would have seen it was nine, but the rooms were all alike in their primitive simplicity, and he was deeply interested in other matters. His foot struck against a pair of riding boots standing in the middle of the floor. Finnerty kicked them through the *pardah* to the hall, muttering: "That Abdul is a *budmash*; I'll fine

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him eight annas for leavin' me boots there—I might have broken me neck."

He threw his coat and helmet on a chair, lighted a cheroot, and stretched himself on the bed to wait for a visitation of justice. In truth, the man from Birmingham had probably meant court business; but such a thing as law was outside the cognizance of the Keddah Sahib; he was a law unto himself.

"He'll be comin' presintly," Finnerty murmured drowsily, as the many potations tugged at his eyelids, "but hurry, you darlin'."

Then he thought regretfully of the physical incapacity of the Englishman. After all, there would be little real enjoyment in the proceedings; the man from Birmingham would provide but poor sport.

"Hivins! p'raps he'll bring a friend. Faith, then there will be fun. P'raps he will—by the Powers! He's sure to. Yes, there'll be sport after all; yes—there'll be sport." The Keddah Sahib was asleep.

And he dreamed that one of his own kind, as big and sinewy as a Punjabi wrestler, came and gripped him, and the strength of the stranger's arms set his physical being a-throb with the ecstasy of combat; of glorious, straining, bone-creaking combat.

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As Finnerty slept, a man as big as the Ked-dah Sahib, clad in a towel and pajama pants, stepped from a bath room at the end of the hall. It was Colonel Le Messurier; and if Finnerty was the strongest man in the service, Le Messurier was the handsomest, and almost as strong.

The colonel slipped quietly along to Number 9. He stared when he saw his riding boots lying drunkenly in the corridor, and muttered, "The devil take that bearer!" as he passed through the *purdah*.

Inside the room he stared again. On his bed lay a huge, rumpled creature snoring voluminously. A lighted cheroot was sizzling in the pillow case.

"By Jove! of all the infernal cheek!" exclaimed the indignant colonel. Then he laid a heavy hand upon the sleeper's arm, and Finnerty's eyes opening fell upon a pair of satin-skinned shoulders as broad as a gladiator's.

The Irishman sprang to his feet. "Och, you boy—you've come!" he cried joyously, as he looked straight into a pair of blue-gray eyes that were on a level with his own. "Faith, an' you're ready for business," as his eye took in the fighting trim of the stranger, who was stripped to his waist.

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"What are you doing here?" queried the gladiator.

"Waitin' for you, you darlin'!"

"Waiting for me, eh?" The gladiator dropped the boots and surveyed the dusty imprint of Finnerty's feet on his bed. "Get out!" he said.

The Keddah Sahib laughed, and tightened his belt.

"Come, leave the room! You've got a devilish cheek."

For answer Finnerty slapped him on the chest with the flat of his hand, as is the method of wrestlers, sprang back, and crouched, his eyes wide with delight at the gladiator's excellence of form. Never had he seen in India such a man; tall as himself, lithe and supple, not tied with knotty muscles, but the biceps and the triceps and the broad flat fore arm big and smooth and covered with pink-white skin that was like a woman's.

"You blackguard," cried the gladiator. "Leave the room, or, by Jove, I'll throw you out."

"Begin, you darlin'; I'm cryin' with joy. You're the loveliest boy—for the love of God begin; I'm cryin' with joy."

There was a shimmer of white skin and a

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hand of steel grasped the wrist of the Keddah Sahib's guard and the tussle was on. It was an affair of equality; the scarcity of furniture conduced to freedom of action.

In vain Finnerty had drained the *Punjaub* for a man of his own might; and here, in the grasp of a chanceling, his strength was held in check, and his art was matched by art, and his bones creaked, and his muscles strained, and he had come by sport such as he had dreamed of.

Finnerty's shirt hung in shreds. Once he found time to strip the collar from his swelling neck; once the gladiator, fastening in his belt, lifted him from the floor and started toward the door. Then they were on the mat and Finnerty's breath, made thick by his too generous potations, blew hot and strong against the pink cheek of the gladiator.

It was an accident—Finnerty would have given a month's pay to have it undone—but his hand slipped on the moist skin, and lifted a welt over the gladiator's eye.

"You blackguard! You cad!" he heard panted through the set teeth of the gladiator, and a knee knuckled his ribs as he turned.

Finnerty took "to the bridge" for a breathing space, and a smooth hand glided beneath

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his armpit, and a hot palm lay against the back of his neck.

A desolating regret filled the soul of the Keddah Sahib, as he waited cooling his lungs. Here was the opportunity of a lifetime, and he rank out of condition.

"Curse the beer *sharab*! Why did I touch it?" he moaned inwardly. "I'm an old woman—I'm a punkah cooly—I'm a fat baboo—that's what I am!"

Then he was woven sideways till his spine was like a corkscrew, and another hand came up between his legs and laid him by the thigh.

"Och, you laddie-buck!" he muttered; "you're the fairest play boy from over the sea, and I'll promise you this, that if me shoulders touch the mat, I'll walk out like a lamb and give you me own room."

Then like a wire jack-in-the-box Finnerty spiraled straight through the holding arms and was up on top of a strong-bridged back that was like chiseled ivory.

"Rest a bit, you darlin'! Rest a bit, you boy!" he said; "it's yourself that's up to the game."

Finnerty looked longingly at the opening he saw for the "strangle hold"; he shut his eyes

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to put the temptation from him—the gladiator played the game too fair for a trick.

There was a full half-hour of this joyous entertainment; the first fierce onslaught and careless taking of chances had passed away and decorum graced the game. Also there was a suspicion of lethargy creeping into the huge muscles that had strained assiduously.

Because of the frivolous week, Finnerty's condition commenced to tell. Had he been chasing *hathis* in the jungle during that time, the bout would have lasted perhaps till midnight. However, it was now suddenly terminated by a bustle of people at the room door.

The gladiator loosed his grip and sprang nimbly back, and the Keddah Sahib, rising, saw the hotel manager—in fact, the hall thronged with sahibs and the hotel staff, who gazed with a mixture of awe and amusement upon the wrestlers.

The colonel's silk pajamas were no more than an apology; while Finnerty, from the belt up, was a muscular statue of hand-spanked flesh.

"Och, Tremairne!" Finnerty began, but the manager interrupted him with a concise reprimand. No more wild Irish elephant-catchers for the Great Eastern; Finnerty had wrecked a tiffin table, made a bear's garden of the *café*,

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and now the whole hotel had been thrown into confusion by his assault upon Colonel Le Messurier. Indeed, the Keddah Sahib was invited to adjourn to some other hotel, where they looked more kindly upon such proceedings.

It was the Colonel Sahib's voice interrupting the manager: "If this person is quite finished with my room, I should like to dress."

"Your room—his room?" queried the Keddah Sahib, looking from one to the other.

"Yes," answered Tremairne.

Finnerty looked at the number on the door, and the enormity of his transgression swept him into unspeakable shame. He gathered his coat and helmet; in the hallway he said: "And that's Colonel Le Messurier! Sure, I thought it was a pug that Brummagem swine had hired to give me a turn. And I've been touseling Colonel Le Messurier that's just been transferred as Collector of Dhuttaghur. I might've known it—I've heard of him. Me soul's watered to take a throw out of him—I might've known it. But he's a swine with his pride—I've heard that, too. Faith, I'll be broke; I might as well go down and feed meself to the *muggars* in Hooghly River."

The Keddah Sahib, depressed to the edge of misery, sat alone in his room and brooded over

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the trouble he had brought upon himself. A physical struggle bearing the fruitage of a black eye or a strained tendon or even a broken limb was a small matter; but to lay subordinate hands of violence upon his Burra Sahib, Collector of Dhuttaghur, bung up his eye, and leave his silk pajamas in tatters, make an exhibition of him before other sahibs, was something that would set a black mark against his Service name many a year to come. At last here was something he could not leave behind him in Calcutta, for daily he would come face to face with the offended Burra Sahib, and everyone in Dhuttaghur would know. Yes, the idea of the *muggars* in the Hooghly was a good one.

He drank a strong whisky peg—then he drank another; he drank three. For the first time in his remembrance the liquor held a reverse action, it depressed him, it put him in an ugly mood. He cursed the innocent cause of his trouble; he swore jungle oaths at the land and the people of the land.

Mechanically his thoughts came back in yearning to Chota Moti. Yes, that was all he was fit for—homing with elephants; they were big and rough in their way like himself. He filled his pockets with the sweets intended for Moti, muttering to himself: "Hivins, I'm blue!

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I must talk to somebody or something. I'll go *kharab* thinkin' of the cooly-headed fool I am entirely."

When he went downstairs the sahibs shunned him. Finnerty passed out into the street that skirted the *maidan*. He saw men at work on the spot where the circus always stood, and some one said that the circus would be there on the morrow.

Finnerty swung on toward the river, where the thick-foliage trees of "Eden Garden" cut a sky that was like burnished copper from the huge ball of fire that had seared its face in the west. The gray wall of the garden lay like a shadowy serpent beneath trees, in which an army of crows fought and clamored over night resting places. Finnerty swung to the right along a skirting path that was silent and hushed, save for the vociferous crows.

Suddenly a gray, earth-colored form loomed bulkily in front of him. It was like a leaf-covered Hindoo cart; it was a bulgy form like an abnormal *bhesti's* water mussock. The grotesque shadow was on the grassed roadside, close to the garden wall, and some part of it was pulling and breaking the overhanging tree limbs.

As the Keddah Sahib approached, wonder-

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ingly, he cut the wind, and the wind took up the call of his scent. The tearing rustle of dismembered leaves ceased; there was a moment of stillness; then, "Phr-u-i-i, phr-u-t-t, whee-e-e!" came little inquiring grunts.

"Hivins!" ejaculated Finnerty; "by me soul, that's little Moti. I'd know her laugh if I heard it in hell. Wow, you little pig, you! You darlin'—you babe! Where did you come from? God in hivin! But you're welcome to-night, Moti—I'm fair starved with lonesomeness."

Finnerty ran his hand caressingly up and down the trunk that felt at his cheek, and fingered his nose, and blew a smile of delight against his lips, and tugged at his shoulder lovingly; and all the time its owner was squeaking tremulously in an ecstasy of recognition.

"Moti, you little pig—you rascal! Where did you come from?"

The big ears flapped and fanned his face, and the heavy forehead lay against the Irishman's chest, and the little eyes twinkled happily—even in the dusk Finnerty could feel their gleam.

"Och, you sly little pearl!" As Moti fumbled her trunk into his pocket, and shoved taparees and grapes and raisins into her thin-lipped mouth.

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Finnerty threw himself on the grass at the elephant's feet and heaved a sigh of satisfaction.

"Divil the care have you, girl, whether I've touseled the Burra Sahib or not. Och, you're a human—you're better."

The big Irishman patted the trunk of the babe elephant, and talked like a man who had come back to women folks that are true forever, holding no knowledge of misdeeds, nor of anything but just fealty.

And Moti emptied the Sahib's pockets, and bubbled in content, and wound her trunk beneath his shoulders as though she would lift him to her back.

Suddenly Moti cocked her ears, threw her trunk into the air, and stood in silent listening.

"What is it, old girl?" Finnerty asked. "Are they after you? Sure, I know your secret, you little pig, you've skipped away at the landin' from the steamer; you've played me the same trick many a time at the keddah. Come on, then, girl; we'll just slip them for a bit."

Finnerty led the way through a gate in the wall, and with Moti's trunk over his shoulder walked along the circular path that skirted the wall. He could hear the band down on the grassed parade of the garden, and see the blare of electric lights breaking through the foliage.

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Suddenly above the drone of brass came a shrill trumpet note.

The Keddah Sahib stopped and threw his head up in alarm. It was the war trump of an elephant—fighting mad; he knew it well. Moti squeaked in fretful fear.

“My God, Moti, did the whole show break loose? Sure, that’s a bull on the rampage. God save the people——”

Again the shrill trumpet of an elephant came from the direction of the promenade.

“Come, Moti, *chalo* (hurry), me darlin’! There’ll be murder done yonder—there’s women and children there by the score; hurry, Moti!”

Finnerty broke into a trot, and the babe elephant shuffled at his side. Now they were clear of the crotons and the banyans, and in the glare of the electric-lighted promenade the sahib saw something that made even his stout Irish heart miss a beat. It was awful. Like a heap of broken dolls, children and ayahs and white women cowered on one side of the wide grass promenade against a holding wall, and on the other side, just beyond the two gateways, was the road, a seething mass of maddened horses and fear-crazed coachmen, and sahibs who had lost their nerve, and cursed and yelled unintelligible orders, and clambered into carriages that

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were not their own. And in the center of the velvet lawn, just within the gate, was the huge towering form of an elephant weaving his body back and forth, from side to side, his ears cocked forward angrily, his trunk now curling in between his tusks as if for a charge, now stretched sinuously upward as he bellowed his defiance to everything on earth.

"Oh, my God!" moaned Finnerty, "he's fair crazed with the lights and the band and all. How'll I stop him? The fools—the damned cowards! And the women and children frightened to death there!"

There was a gleam of white at his elbow. Two men of the Black Watch, coming through the garden, had checked in their way. Finnerty's big hand shot out, and clutched one by his white tunic.

"Run, man, for your life, to the fort, bring a firin' squad—a Gatlin'—anything. For the sake of the children—run: I'll hold the tusker till you come. Run, man—as you love God, hurry!" To the other he said:

"Go to the children, man. Keep down at the side in the bushes. Get them out—d'you understand?" He clutched the man by the chest and drew him forward till his hot breath burned the other's cheek. "Damn you! Are you a

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coward? Get them out, or I'll murder you. Throw them over the wall—anything. I'll keep the elephant for a bit."

He thrust the soldier from him, and the two dived into the bushes on the left.

"Now, Moti, me darlin'—och, you're feared, you little pig, you're tremblin'. But I'm with you, Moti. You'll go where the Keddah Sahib drives—you always would. Quick, give me your trunk now; there, so!"

And the Keddah Sahib was lifted to the babe elephant's neck; his knees pressed against her ears, and his heavy, iron-shod walking stick was a goad. Finnerty jabbed it fiercely into the pulpy skull of his mount.

"There, Moti, *dauro* now! Squeal, you little pig!" And Finnerty dug with his walking stick till the little trunk was thrown up, uttering a wail of remonstrance.

The mad tusker heard the call of his kind just as he was shuffling toward the screaming children and ayahs. He stopped, threw his huge head up, and his great, fanlike ears waved back and forward, and then cocked intently.

Finnerty drove Moti into the light, and the tusker's restless eye saw them. He whisked about and trumpeted a defiance.

The babe squealed in fear, and stopped.

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"*Dauro*, Moti!" Finnerty cried, hunching the big ears with his knees, and jabbing the skull with his goad. Moti obeyed, and shuffled forward.

Finnerty could see the white-coated soldier driving the children before him like a flock of lambs. A sahib leaped the wall and ran to the children; then another.

"By the grace of God, they'll be saved!" Finnerty cried, "if I can hold this big devil in play. Squeal, you little pig—give him *bat*, Moti. We must keep away from him—just play with him, me darlin'—the devil's fair rampageous. There, just stand where you are, Moti; it'll take him time to make up his mind to charge."

The Keddah Sahib knew every trick of the elephant. He knew that while the tusker's attention was fixed on him and Moti, the children and the sahibs and everything would be forgotten—they would escape. The tusker would probably wait, ready to give battle, and Finnerty's plan was to keep clear of the maddened brute. If he closed in, the bull would crush them both; unless, perhaps, he had an affection for Moti, when he might calm down. This was not at all likely, for the bulls, when angry, were vicious toward their young.

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With difficulty Finnerty kept the babe from bolting. Perhaps it was the white-coated soldier that caught the bull's eye again, for he suddenly wheeled as if to charge and trample the fleeing children.

"He's just a crazy brute—he's fair mast," Finnerty muttered. "*Chalo*, Moti! Squeal, you little pig! Give him tongue!" and he jabbed the babe's head till she trumpeted shrilly, and started forward.

Her call stopped the tusker again. He wheeled erratically, and, without stopping, came thundering down the lawn like a destroying tornado.

"Steady, Moti!" Finnerty yelled; but the babe, crazed with fear, whipped around clumsily, and started back over the pathway.

But the turn held her; she was weak from fear. In a dozen yards the bull had driven his tusks into Moti's rump, and as she fell Finnerty was pinned beneath her massive head.

When the men from Fort William swung into the garden on the run, they heard a vicious squealing cry of victory and hate from the tusker; and he was tramping something into the earth with his knees and tusks when they poured volley after volley into his huge carcass.

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The children and the memsahibs and the ayahs had all escaped unhurt.

That is why, when you ask in India of Finnerty of the Elephant Keddah, they tell you this story first.

THE APOSTASY OF MOUNG PYU *

THE four trails that lead out like a Maltese cross abroad the world never get beyond the land of the simple life. And this is a simple account of MOUNG PYU's crusade for spiritual betterment for himself and the three hundred villagers of Mindak, in Burma.

MOUNG PYU was born a Buddhist; he sat at the feet of the Talopins and imbibed theological wisdom from the sacred book, the Vini. The deputy commissioner of the district took a fancy to the dark-eyed, yellow-skinned little Burman, and had him placed in a government school. Then MOUNG PYU got a clerkship, and after a time he was made deputy assistant magistrate of the third grade, and *Woon* of his own village, Mindak.

What MOUNG PYU thought, Mindak thought; and when MOUNG PYU advised, Mindak concurred. Even the chief commissioner at Rangoon knew this; and whatever there was to be

* MOUNG PYU (pronounced Pu) translated is Mr. White.

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settled or adjusted in Mindak District was incased in large, official blue envelopes, tied with red tape, closed with the awful seal of the British Raj, and sent to MOUNG PYU. There was never any worry after that. The chief commissioner sighed with satisfaction; the commissioner of Aracan nodded his old head in wise appreciation; the deputy commissioner got the *kudos* (glory) of it all; and MOUNG PYU, deputy assistant magistrate of the third grade, adjusted the unpleasantness.

He was a dapper little man with his jacket of white cloth, his gay silk putsoe that had been made in the hand looms of Mandalay, and the white handkerchief wound jauntily about his heavy black hair, the two ends sticking up like the wings of a bird—this was the insignia of a village elder, and MOUNG PYU was that *in excelsis*.

Under MOUNG PYU's rule Mindak was Utopia. The Buddhist priests, the Talopins, waxed sleek in content; and the little pagoda on Tiger Hill had been regilt with pure gold leaf, till its slender tapering form rose from a dark emerald setting of mangoe tree and padouk and tamarind, and penciled the blue sky a gleaming plinth of reflected sunlight. This had come from the purse of MOUNG PYU. He could not forever

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be sending away the little bags of rupees that so mysteriously appeared upon his writing table, so he exorcised the little devil of corruptive influence that was in the silver disks by putting them to work for the spiritual betterment of his people.

Poh San, who had been Woon before MOUNG PYU, had kept all these little gifts that are the *dustoor* (perquisites) of native officials, and had married six wives. At the last, when the shadow of Nirvana threw a chill over the soul of Poh San, he prepared a little cave temple in the soft rock of Tiger Hill, placed in it a square-toed, alabaster Buddha, and died full of honor and sanctity. That was Poh San's way, which was the way of all rich, good Burmans. But MOUNG PYU beautified the pagoda and repaired the priests' *zyat* (dwelling), and married but one wife; and after a time she died, and left two little girls with MOUNG PYU.

The religion that the Talopins taught was mystical, altogether simple and beautiful. It was a sin to take life, because all life was one under different forms; so MOUNG PYU ate not even an egg, lest the spirit of some ancestor might have come back to assume the feathered garb of a fowl. And the Vini read that liquor—so much as might cling to the point of a knife

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—was harmful; so MOUNG PYU drank milk and water and the milk of cocoanuts, and pondered over the wise sayings of GAUDAMA BUDDHA.

The religion of the sahibs that were down in PHRANG he judged of entirely by the canons of his own faith. The sahibs ate the flesh that had carried life, they drank the forbidden liquor; they also did other things that the priests said were wrong and evil in the eyes of BUDDHA GAUDAMA.

But it happened that even in the eyes of the TALOPINS there was one godly person of the white man's faith, a woman, "Craig Memsahib." She was a Baptist missionary from America. Her husband had died in harness in BURMA some years before, and she had gone on in a simple, Christian spirit, after the manner of Christ Himself. All through ARACAN were children whose fathers had been white men, and who had gone back to their own country. Craig Memsahib gathered these half-orphaned ones into her train of poor followers whenever she could. It was a gladsome sight to see her wandering about the districts, from village to village, with her devoted children. When they were small she had them placed in schools; the larger ones she took with her.

Craig Memsahib came many times to MIN-

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dak; and because of his knowledge that she was indeed a holy woman, MOUNG PYU commenced to listen, at first with doubting curiosity. But as gently as a soft hand opens a flower, CRAIG MEMSAHIB discovered for the WOON the beautiful truth of a life as Christ would have it. He began to see that the TALOPINS taught all of the flesh life, or of nothing; all was of the earth, and returning to earth, a chain of existence leading to nothing but the end of everything.

All this came not as it may be told in a day, or a moon, but in many moons; and in the end MOUNG PYU gravely announced that all his people—the people of MINDAK—now were Baptists. He had read and pondered, and come by a more beautiful truth than was in the VINI, or in the shaven-headed craniums of the yellow-robed TALOPINS, and his people would now profit by his discovered blessing and become Baptists.

This wholesale conversion of three hundred Buddhists brought prayers of thankfulness from the simple Christian woman CRAIG MEMSAHIB.

But, unfortunately, the fame of it came to the ears of the Rev. BELDON HOBBS, of PHRANG. He was clergyman of the Church of England, the Established Church, which means first claim on all things spiritual. In addition, the Rev. BELDON HOBBS was many other things akin to arro-

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gance. He was large and pompous and doled out religion as alms, holding that he had full vicarage from the Lord for the salvation of all peoples. So he blustered, and went in righteous indignation to the deputy commissioner—the church and the state were inseparable. That three hundred souls, bound in allegiance to the British Raj, should come under the dominion of a church that was no church at all was, according to Hobbs, altogether an outrage. They might as well turn dacoits at once.

Just at that psychological moment a serious calamity occurred. The brave little Craig Memsahib died, ministering to the people of a village stricken with cholera. The metamorphosis of Buddhistic Mindak had not been quite completed, for the villagers were to have been baptized, *en masse*, when Craig Memsahib arrived, bringing an ordained Baptist minister, the Rev. John Blackmar, from Phrang. Now she was dead, and MOUNG PYU, dreading the spiritual dominion of Rev. Hobbs as something worse even than the power of the Talopins, took the matter in his own hands, and dipped the obedient villagers, declaring that now they were indeed of the faith of the holy woman they had all revered.

Then came the Rev. Blackmar too late for

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this baptismal function. He was a zealous, narrow-minded little man—a stickler for tenets and observances, and religion according to prescribed method. He meant well, but he didn't know. To him the Buddhists were pagans, benighted worshipers of graven images. He used to say these things, honestly enough, but without understanding. So he reprimanded MOUNG PYU for his assumption of ministerial power, and explained that becoming a Baptist was not a haphazard affair.

MOUNG PYU was wise enough to know that neither the Rev. Blackmar nor the Rev. Hobbs nor even the holy teacher CRAIG MEMSAHIB were Christianity itself. But the manner of faith that had won MOUNG PYU was the sweet Christly love religion of CRAIG MEMSAHIB; and this other repellent, formal dogmatism that was of the little sharp-nosed minister drove MOUNG PYU into revolt, and he declared, with Burmese vivacity, that if they were not now Baptists they were indeed not Baptists at all.

So the Rev. Blackmar preached to the big, pink-clustered padouk tree, while the villagers went down to the many-caved temples in Tiger Hill with offerings of rice and sweetmeats to the alabaster Buddhas; and in the end the conscientious minister went disconsolately back to

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Phrang, sorrowing over the instability of the Oriental.

The little pilgrimage to the cave temples had been solely a polite intimation to the minister, and not a real reapostasy, for the Woon was still disturbed in his mind over the incompleteness of Buddhism.

By this time the Rev. Beldon Hobbs had harassed the deputy commissioner over the Woon of Mindak's apostasy, and through him the commissioner; and the commissioner, with repugnance in his soul, had memorialized the chief commissioner. The correspondence, with notes and comments, had all come back as weapons of offense to Padre Hobbs. So he went up into the land of Mindak with a flaming sword, bearing an order from the deputy commissioner that he was to have carriers and transport and boats and whatever else his sweet will desired. That was essentially Padre Hobbs's way—the repellent, enforcing method, so unlike the love manner of Christ and Craig Memsahib.

He had gone by boat from Phrang to Oung; and from Oung it was two days' travel by jungle path to Mindak. But when the men of Oung refused to convey him to Mindak, because a pair of man-eating tigers had made a preserve of the

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jungle bordering the trail, Padre Hobbs showed his order to the village headman, and explained that the latter would lose his place and the village would be fined and the people would sit forever in the black disfavor of the commissioner if the carriers and the bullock carts were not forthcoming.

Padre Hobbs always had his way, even in Phrang; so the headman forced the frightened villagers out into the jungle; and there the padre, who was large in self-reliance, explained that desertion would be a personal affront, and he would deal with it personally to the utter extermination of the misguided deserters.

Once, fearing the blood thirst of "Stripes" and his wife more than the Padre Sahib's anger, two carriers loitered behind looking for a chance to desert. The Padre Sahib put this little matter of delinquency right, in his promised way, and foolishly, so far as the Christian faith was concerned, struck one of the men with his walking stick. Individually Padre Hobbs would have paid this debt of hate incurred quickly enough, but officially he represented the British Raj, the Sircar, so all that happened in the way of retribution was the relating of this story in Mindak when they arrived. And because of the story the clergyman might as well have sat in Phrang,

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for the Talopins explained that the new religion of love and soul and other beautiful things had died with Craig Memsahib, and this was altogether a different affair. It was not religion at all—it was *zabbardasti*, which means force by men in power. Thus the padre's arrogant personality subverted the true thing; and the Talopins saw to it that it did.

Moung Pyu, being an Oriental, had greater wisdom than a serpent, for, when it was all for the best, he could preserve a silence that was of the most refined gold. So he said to his adherents: "The Padre Sahib is of low caste, for the men of high caste do not lose their tempers, except when the swords drink blood. But what he has done we have not seen, and what he has said we have not heard. If he departs in peace then there will be peace in Mindak; for one of his hands is the law, and one of his hands is the sahib's way of faith, and these two things are greater than the Padre Sahib or the people of Mindak."

It was a crude jungle parable, which the villagers but half-understood; but Moung Pyu had said it, therefore it stood as a saying of King Theebaw's had in the old days. And the English clergyman wallowed back to Phrang unctiously his soul with the credit of martyrdom

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because of the sweltering jungle pilgrimage; and there he wrote in the records that three hundred converts had come into the fold of the Established Church.

The deputy commissioner groaned and administered the law with fierce relentlessness for days when he realized that the padre's disturbing influence had extended out into the district; for now there would be endless complaints from the Talopins of illegal interference, and many other tribulations.

When the padre had departed MOUNG PYU sat down and wrote to the commissioner for six months' leave of absence. And when the leave had come, he said to MINDAK: "I am going across the big black water to the land of the sovereign, to Bilatti (England)."

MINDAK was astonished, but it didn't say so. What it said was: "The Sovereign will be graciously pleased to see MOUNG PYU, and when MOUNG PYU returns he will be as wise as the great Commissioner Sahib in Rangoon."

MOUNG PYU said a few words of wisdom to the Talopins, advising them to meditate deeply among themselves while he was gone; that their lacquer trays for receiving votive offerings of food would be well supplied if they preserved an intense holy seclusion. And to the village

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elders he said: "Till the rice fields diligently and keep out the opium, and guard against the dacoits, and when I come back again we will discuss this question of what is to be when we pass away, because now we have heard Craig Memsahib and the Baptist Mission Sahib and the great Church Sahib, who is Hobbs, and our own Talopins, and it is like a case in my court where there are many witnesses on both sides, and judgment cannot be given until the case is all clear. If there had been no one but the Talopins the case would have been simple, or if the others had been all like Craig Memsahib, we might have understood; but now we are like children, we do not know what is being taught us."

Moung Pyu left the two little girls with their grandmother, Mahthee, saying: "Let them read from this book that Craig Memsahib gave them, for it is a good book. And in it is written that even the elders must become as little children to understand this great secret."

Then the Woon went to Phrang and passed to the British India steamer that would carry him to Calcutta, to catch the big steamer that crossed the black water to England.

What came the way of the Burman in England would make a story of itself, and this one

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bears only on the intricate matter of his many conversions in Burma.

Five and one-half months from the date of MOUNG PYU's departure it was known in PHRANG that he would arrive back by the *Karagola*. But the telegraphed list of passengers published in the *Phrang News* the day before the *Karagola's* arrival contained not the name of MOUNG PYU.

No one in PHRANG suspected that the "Mr. White" in the list was the Woon of Mindak, Anglicized—but it was. And MOUNG PYU stepped from the steamer at PHRANG as Mr. White, the most extraordinarily metamorphosed Oriental that ever caused a man to rub his eyes in bewildered astonishment.

Mr. White wore a tall silk hat, and the heavy black hair had been cut away to exceeding closeness. A stiff white collar was graced by a most intense four-in-hand tie, reflecting the blood-red glitter of a ruby-studded pin. A frock coat and gray-striped trousers, cut in the latest fashion, draped the slim figure of Mr. White down to gray spats and buttoned patent-leather boots. His slim, gray-gloved fingers jauntily carried a gold-headed cane.

The sahibs who knew MOUNG PYU, and loved him for his fealty to the British Raj, screamed

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with joy. It was so like the stirring little Burman to do the business thoroughly if he did it at all. And he had—there could be no manner of doubt about that; the ocular evidence was complete.

But there was still something more—something very much more; for beside the dapper Mr. White walked a sweet-faced English girl whom he introduced as Miss Estella Roydon. Miss Roydon had come out as governess for Mr. White's two motherless girls.

When this was told at the Gymkhana Club the sahibs laughed merrily; when they carried the story home the memsahibs laughed sarcastically. Everybody in Phrang laughed, except two men—Padre Hobbs and One Sahib.

Padre Hobbs rolled his eyes in horror; then he spoke words of angry denunciation; and the One Sahib, who was like a blood brother to MOUNG PYU, drew his face into a frown of commiseration and then went and talked to the little man.

First he asked him questions, and learned this: that MOUNG PYU had found a woman in England who was as simple a Christian as CRAIG MEMSAHIB had been. And there, where there were so many workers, she was very poor—though her people had not always been poor.

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And MOUNG PYU had reasoned that if this good woman came to Mindak and taught his children the same Christian love wisdom that CRAIG MEMSAHIB had known, the girls would grow up like the teacher, and the villagers would also become like that, and there would be no doubting because of Hobbism or Blackmarism or the soulless faith of the Talopins.

When MOUNG PYU told this child story, that was really so very wise, the ONE SAHIB knew and believed that it was all and all; but he also knew what PADRE HOBBS had said about this new impossible, intolerable thing. So, very sadly, he told MOUNG PYU that his Utopian dream wouldn't do, and explained why. The why was, that nobody in India believed anything but evil where there was a woman in the case, and evil would be believed of it. Even if the sahibs wished to be charitable PADRE HOBBS wouldn't let them.

Then the ONE SAHIB went back to his bungalow and said to his wife: "For God's sake go and bring that English girl here to stay with you, before the gentle padre makes it impossible."

The ONE SAHIB knew also that the outrageous clothes and hat and spats that turned the splendid little Burman into a paroquet were due solely

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to MOUNG PYU's desire for betterment and his inherent Burman love of finery.

The padre was not a meditative man, not one to sit and let fruit ripen before he judged of its flavor; so, bubbling with indignation, he sallied forth and swooped down upon the man, large in his Bond Street apparel.

MOUNG PYU's black Burman eyes opened very wide in astonishment as Padre Hobbs talked with vociferous eloquence. And after a little the Burman eyes grew cloudy with red anger.

"Woman?" he queried. "There are many women of my own kind in Mindak, Padre Sahib."

But the padre buried his rubicant nose in a big handkerchief and trumpeted in condemnatory unbelief. To him MOUNG PYU's words were but the duplicity of a Burman. However, thank God, no subtle Oriental could pull the wool over his eyes. It would be an outrage against the church—the commissioner would certainly interfere—somehow it would reflect upon the state of society in Phrang, for Phrang represented the district, if this matter were not put an end to.

This ready acceptance of evil intent where there was none, was a disquieting revelation to the boy-minded Burman. Somehow, as Padre

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Hobbs talked, the English clothes became distasteful to MOUNG PYU; they seemed to drag him into this atmosphere of contaminating suspicion. In his own putsoe and little jacket he could have spoken out indignantly as a simple-living villager; all the people of his village were moral. POH SAN had married six wives, but he had *married* them—it was according to their law. MOUNG PYU looked down at the glittering buttoned boots and the silly spats—indeed, they were more of that life he had seen in London, with its many stories of complicated lives, than of the village where no one would even have hinted at what the padre spoke so plainly about.

So, presently, MOUNG PYU, answering, said: “You are altogether wrong, Minister Sahib, but I think you are right. I am a Burman, and to be a good Burman is very good—for a Burman. Miss ROYDON is too good a woman to be here where people speak ill of her, so she must go back to England. I will pay all the passage and for her trouble.”

When the padre had gone, MOUNG PYU took off his silly make-up and gave the clothes to a half-caste clerk in the telegraph service. He sighed in loose-hearted relief as he shoved his feet into the canvas shoes that had been made

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by a Chinaman at Phrang, and adjusted his silk putsoe with happy carefulness. Then he went to the One Sahib's bungalow and gave the sahib a large check on the Bank of Bengal for the English girl's expenses, said good-by to her, and went back to Mindak.

There he summoned the Talopins beneath the padouk tree, and said: "We must keep to all that is good in the faith of our fathers. Buddha taught us no evil, the evil comes of ourselves. The Christian religion is also very beautiful because of Christ, and if at any time one like the Craig Memsahib comes again, who can keep us close to their Christ and teach us so that we can understand, perhaps we will listen."

What the girl said to the One Sahib when he put her on the steamer for home was: "Moung Pyu is the gentlest Christian I ever knew."

NAWAZ KHAN, THE GIFT OF ALLAH

NAWAZ KHAN was the fighting ram of the Marris. This is a chronicle of the result of his dabbling in the affairs of the British Empire.

The Marris tribesmen were a joyous set of looting blackguards, proper Pathans. They were a small tribe; to them had come down a heritage of border feud that, while it developed the fighting qualities of the survivors, kept the census within bounds.

Their land was fifty miles northeast of a sin-stricken teshil, named Sibi, on the Afghan border. Any tribe that lives within fifty miles of that station is sure to be bad clean through. Sibi was known as "the white man's grave": that was flattery—it was worse.

In September when I passed through the land of the Marris they despoiled me with cheerful abandon; they looted my commissariat camel with Platonic freedom; and one night a lover of fine raiment came as I slept and cut the side from my tent to make a toga for his broad shoulders. Allah! that was clever.

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Six footsore brigands made sandals from my leather gun case, and then came and hobnobbed with me over a pot of tea. They were proud of their new foot wear; the oak-tanned soles peeped at me joyously from beneath the square, rugged toes of the unabashed Pathans. I said nothing about this little matter—controversy might have ended with a slit in my neck; they had such a summary way of ending unpleasant arguments.

My guide, who was a first cousin to these outlaws in deviltry, was the best-natured blackguard I ever traveled with; he gave me politic pointers, for he had the wisdom of the serpent.

“These dwellers in caves,” he said, “are the unregenerate offspring of depraved camels—also of evil swine; therefore take no notice, and we will get through pleasantly enough—without trouble.”

His policy was sound; so the Marris and I remained on the very best of terms. They even showed me Nawaz Khan, the fighting ram that had bucked into oblivion every other ram from Dera Ghazi to Peshawar. And because of that they had been exalted among the ram-fighting, man-fighting, any-sort-of-fighting nations of that *kush*.

At the guide's suggestion, I gave the owner,

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Rahat Shah, five rupees to make silver knobs for the points of the Khan's horns. Surely I had become a blood brother to the cutthroat Marris. That was what the guide said—also was I safe in the sight of Allah, he assured me.

When I returned in December, Nawaz Khan, "the Gift of Allah," was gone. He had been looted, or had tumbled over a cliff. The tribe had searched at the bottom of every precipice without result. That he had been stolen was as difficult of belief as the statement that some one had made away with Buddha's tooth from the temple at Kandy.

But Nawaz Khan was gone of a certainty. And now there was only the memory of his many battles, and the promise of much murder for the thieves who held him.

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When I reached Sibi, almost the first sight I saw was a ram, joyous in much fat, taking a rise out of a tall Punjabi orderly in front of his colonel's tent. The ram had caught him fair in the middle, on the south side, and if the soldier had been brittle he would have broken in two. As it was, he covered much territory before alighting on his head in the white sand of the Sibi plain.

The orderly was vexed at the importunate

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attention from the hard-headed ram. He picked himself up with Sikh dignity and reached for his gun, which stood with three inches of its iron muzzle buried in the soft earth.

Now a ram, when he tries for a knock-out blow and fails, usually backs up and plays a little harder next time; but the orderly's assailant seemed to think he had carried the joke far enough, wisely, perhaps, and walked sedately over to the colonel's dogcart and started peeling the yellow paint from the spokes.

Something about the cut of this pugnacious sheep appeared familiar to me. I maneuvered up to him strategically, keeping my line of retreat well open. A critical reconnoissance convinced me that it was the fighting ram of my freebooting friend who lived in the foothills of the Sulimans; there were the silver knobs of which I was the donor.

Great Scott! what was he doing here at the colonel's tent? The whole Marris country would be in a blaze if they knew of it.

But they had looted me; therefore let them look to Allah for the return of their tribe's glory.

I asked Tenier, who was a lieutenant in the regiment, where they had *pakaraod* the sheep.

"Such a lark!" he answered. "You know

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the colonel is a queer fish; studies his book on tactics—form D.B.Z. in his pocket all the time. Good enough chap, you know, the old fellow is, wouldn't know enough to step inside if it were raining bullets, and nothing to be gained by getting shot; but all the same, he's like one of those greaseless country carts with his squeaky voice—puts the fellows all on edge, you know.

"We don't mind fighting—like it, of course; but, hang it all! when there's no fighting to be got—when all these hill fellows are like a bally lot of shepherds, plodding around with their sheep and goats, and no raiding on, why we want a bit of fun, or else we'll go flabby.

"Now, 'Old Squeaks'—that's what the chaps call him—thinks fun—polo, and all the rest of it, you know—is all skittles; he talks about the officers blowin' their oof, and tommy-rot of that sort."

I let Tenier talk, and busied myself with his cheroot case, hunting for a decent Trichi; I knew there was something needing a lot of explaining away, and that my young friend was leading up to it diplomatically enough. So I waited, and smoked patiently as he rattled on with his picturesque narrative.

"Well, it seemed hopeless enough; we sat in the rottenest sort of luck. There was some

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fighting up Chitral way with Shir Afzul, Umra Khan, and that lot, but we never got the route. The camp was simply dying of stagnation. If cholera had come down from the Bolan, as it did last year, it would have played merry havoc with us—we were that stalled for want of fighting, or something.

“There were always five or six of our fellows in hospital, and not a broken bone or a ‘concussion’ in the whole bally lot—nothing but flabby heart. That was what was bowling them over—thinking. Good God! we didn’t come out here to think, did we, Braem?”

“I should say not,” I replied, with an emphatic laugh.

Tenier looked at me quizzically. “Don’t be a sarcastic goat,” he said testily. “We can think right enough when it’s needed; but fighting or polo or racing’s the thing to keep a man fit. Good Heavens! the surgeon actually hinted that some of the fellows were malingering. It would have ended in mutiny right enough; but just then we got hold of Yusuf——”

Before my friend had time to finish the sentence, there was a rushing noise like the cutting loose of a junior cyclone, and over we went, tent and all. Lord! but it was a mix up. The cot, a stool, a suit case, young Teniers with a sword

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spitted between his legs, and myself rolled up in several yards of canvas.

I felt some great body go crashing over me; and heard, rather indistinctly, the lieutenant's voice, muffled in the folds of the tent, saying, "It's that damn ram, I bet a guinea! What in the name of Allah is he after now?"

It was the Khan right enough. When a sergeant and two privates had sorted us from among the *débris*, we discovered that a small brick-laden donkey had excited the ram's curiosity, and he had attempted to sample the stability of the groggy little legs that looked so hopelessly inadequate.

The donkey flipped about just in time to miss the rush, and Nawaz Khan's charge carried him through our canvas house. When the soldiers had repitched the wrecked tent, Teniers continued the interrupted history of the advent of the ram.

"Does he do that often?" I asked.

"That's the first time he's pipped my castle," said the lieutenant, working the sand out of his hair with a brush. "His favorite mark is a Tommy curled up on a charpoy asleep. Sometimes he bunts the water barrels over, too; and once he tipped the old man up backing to charge something that seemed a happy mark. Squeaks

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was heels on, and didn't see him coming. We hid the ram for two days—the colonel would have shot him."

"Who owns him—did one of the men *chor* (steal) him?" I asked cautiously, for the Khan's deeds made my friend a bit irrelevant to the point at issue.

"No; got him from Yusuf—you know Yusuf Khan, the camel man?"

I assented. I remembered him well. Once upon a time he had sold me a mad Bokharan as a riding camel, and the blatant thing had run away with me for twenty miles. At the end I was seasick, and for a week had amateur rheumatism. "Yes, I remember him," I said reminiscently; "he's a bad lot even for a Pathan."

"Well, Yusuf wanted the contract for supplying transport camels, and came to me about it. Wanted to know what *backsheesh* he could give the colonel to win his heart. Did you ever hear of such a thing? Fancy his trying to work Squeaks that way! They do it among themselves, you know; everybody's got to have his *dustoor*, so he thought it was only a question of finding out what the colonel's fancy ran to.

"Lutyens, who came up with the regiment, was with me, and we pulled old Yusuf's leg no end of a time, quizzing him as to what he had to

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give the colonel. At last he mentioned that he had a fighting ram, the best between Sibi and Cabul.

"By Jove! you should have seen Lutyens jump at that. He swore the colonel was just dying to have a fighting ram; that he was a great sportsman, and simply reveled in that sort of thing—lived on it. I must say that I backed the major up—I had to."

"'You'll get anything you want,' Lutyens told Yusuf; 'only bring the ram in.'"

"Fancy Squeaks fighting rams—it's unholy! His aunt, or somebody, wouldn't like it.

"We put the other fellows on to the 'good thing,' and in the end Yusuf was coached properly. Also we worked the colonel—stuffed him. It was as good as a ballet, or a brush up in the hills. The fellows came out of hospital to play the new game that was on.

"The colonel, you know, had been down in Burma or China or some other heathen country with his regiment, and when they were sent up here to relieve the Tenth, neither he nor any of the others knew a word of this Pathan *baht*—Pushtu is like dummy talk to them. Of course he had passed in the thing at home, the lingo we all went through—Urdu, they call it, I think; but here it seems to be pushtu, sheep talk and

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Persian mixed. When Squeaks thinks he's telling them to clear out, they come and sit in his lap.

"We squared his *krani* (clerk). He's a Bengali baboo, and is afraid of everything but rupees and *ghee*. Lutyens frightened him to death—swore he'd ride Shahzada over him by accident if he didn't make proper talk when Yusuf brought in the lambkin.

"One day Yusuf and three other brawny Afghans turned up with the dirt of twoscore years thick upon the lot of them. Cracky! but they were fierce-looking; jezails, jade-handled knives the length of your arm, and all the rest of their cutthroat tools. With them came the ram, of course. He was short-clipped and gorgeous in many colors, painted up for the occasion."

" 'Diplomacy is the racket,' said Lutyens, 'play Squeaks on that.'

"You see the colonel has a hobby that if we can humor these natives we shan't have to fight them. It'll be a beastly hole to live in if that ever comes about; we'd soon die off if there was no fighting to be had.

"The old man had a regular *darbar*; for the baboo explained that Yusuf was one of the Khan of Kelat's small chiefs, and that he wanted to make friendship with the English for his tribe.

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His people lived somewhere up in the Bolans near Kirta.

"They ate salt together and touched palms with a rupee and things went on swimmingly.

"Yusuf couldn't understand a word the colonel said, and the Afghan *baht* was all Greek to Squeaks. Lutyens had his eye on the Krani, who was interpreting after a fashion—you know Lutyens's eye; it's like a cocked pistol—so we were on velvet.

"The game was that Yusuf had brought in the ram as a peace offering; it was the thing his people prized most on earth—a sort of sacred gift; and so long as the colonel kept the ram in the regiment, Yusuf's people would look upon us as blood brothers.

"It was all Lutyens's doings, I swear."

"At first, when the colonel understood that he was to take the ram, he bucked at the idea. He hates everything but a cavalry horse, you know; and only likes them because they're useful.

"The funny part of the business was, that Yusuf really got the contract for the camels, not on account of the sheep, but because the colonel thought it a good thing to win over this head-man."

"That's how we got the ram," said Teniers.

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“He simply won’t leave the colonel—hangs around his tent all the time bunting the orderly. One day he chewed the tops off Squeaks’s new boots. He’s really kept us alive. And what’s odd, the colonel’s got fond of him—we all know that; he never bunted the old man once, only the time he upset him by mistake. He just does as he likes in the regiment; they look upon him as a mascot.

“He’s a proper budmash, but what can you expect from a ram that’s been brought up among these sons of Belial when he gets into decent society?

“The sergeant’s mess clubbed in and put that silver ring on his horn. They’re a scum lot—they looted all the refreshment rooms coming up from Karachi, but they’d fight for the lamb until they were wiped out, I believe. That’s because he’s so properly bad; they like it.”

I said never a word about the original owners of the ram—it would be a pity to spoil sport. If Yusuf had looted him from the Marris he deserved that camel contract. I even forgave him my ride on the mad Bokaran.

Then we had a week of proper Sibi dullness; nothing happened, absolutely nothing—only the heat; it was terrific.

The Beluchis in the plain about Sibi went out

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and tilled their fields and tended their flocks and never a hillman swooped down on them. It looked as though the little round towers of defense dotted all over the plain like huge churns might as well be leveled to the ground. The fellows squabbled among themselves, and prayed for strong-hearted infidels to come down and fight them. It was the heat—it took the life out of everything. Even the Khan lay asleep most of the time—he was getting fat.

All week the colonel had labored with official zeal over a letter to the *Civil and Military Gazette* on the necessity for higher diplomatic knowledge among military officers in command in border districts. He made a strong point of the assertion that "diplomacy was the higher form of applied patience." He always wrote with a tight grip on the pen, and his mouth twisted to one side. That's a proper military man's attitude—it's like sword play.

Incidentally the ram mixed up with the colonel's epic. Tuesday, while he was sweating over an intricate paragraph that wouldn't go right anyhow, the Khan stalked Lutyens's fox terrier, and shikarried him into the colonel's tent. The table was upset, and three pages of the manuscript floated in ink. The profanity

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was awful. It frightened even the Khan, and he didn't show up for a day.

When the old man finished the article Thursday, he had writer's cramp and a stiff neck. Friday the ram nibbled the letter out of his tunic pocket as it lay on a chair, and ate it. The orderly saw him just finishing the "Yours truly, Diplomat."

Now patience was a good thing to write about in an article on diplomacy, but when it came to having a week's work chewed up by a bilious ram, it was a little too much for human nature, and the colonel's language was terrific; also he battered the Khan.

All Saturday we laughed over this, for it leaked out. That night Nawaz Khan chevvied a bowl of lettuce that was on Major Lutyens's dinner table; and the four of us who were to have dined with him had to go and borrow a scrap meal from different sections of the camp. It cost Lutyens twenty-five rupees for new dishes, to say nothing of two wasted bottles of Simpkin opened on the ram's horns.

Monday, joy reigned in the regiment. The "route" was out for a detachment of two companies. Where they were going nobody knew only the colonel. Something was on up in the hills; it couldn't be a scrap with only two com-

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panies going, it must be political. However, it was a move, and Lutyens and Teniers, who were going, were full of the thing.

By daylight Tuesday morning the men were on the march; and by noon the broad, flat surface of the Sibi *Put* (desert) had swallowed them up; there was only a glinting mirage where they had gone off toward the northeast. They were heading straight for the Marris hills.

A feeling of misgiving came over me when I realized that they were going toward the Marris Pass, for the ram had gone with them.

At sunrise Thursday, bright glinting flashes struck our camp, thrown from the hills to the east. It was a heliograph signal. It read: "Surrounded by tribesmen fifteen miles up the Pass. Hard pressed. Send reënforcements."

An answer was flashed back that we'd leave immediately, and soon the balance of the regiment was streaming across the *Put*, with two seven-pounders and a Gatling.

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This is what had happened in the mean time:

After they had gone about five miles, the colonel suddenly discovered that Nawaz Khan was complacently marching with the transport. The old man swore like a trooper. "Curse the brute," he exclaimed, "am I never going to get

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away from that ram?" But the fellows fancied he was really pleased that the Khan had stuck to them. It was too late to turn him back, so Nawaz and the orderly plodded along together.

When they got among the hills, the natives came into the camp friendly enough. At first there were a few of them. They talked to the colonel through the krani, and though the latter was a little mixed on their *baht*, he understood just enough to exchange the courtesies.

But the minute they got their eye on the ram, things changed. They soon slipped away, but our fellows didn't know that it had anything to do with the Khan; they didn't know he had been looted from the Marris.

At the next halt, farther up in the hills, quite a large body of tribesmen came in and had a palaver. Our fellows had seen them hovering about on the line of march. The baboo couldn't explain four annas of what they said; but it was easy to see they were demanding the ram.

Then the old man's liking for the beast cropped up. "It was infernal cheek," he called it. "The ram was the regiment's mascot—it would be like giving up the colors. Never! he'd fight them first. If it were a sort of toll they

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were levying, he'd pay something for the sake of peace, rather than have a *tamasha*."

He ordered the baboo to give the chief, Afzul ul Mulk, fifty rupees. The latter tucked the bag of silver in his belt, and sat on his haunches sullenly.

"What is he waiting for?" asked the colonel.

"He wants the ram, sir."

This brought the colonel to the end of his diplomatic tether—his choler got up, and he ordered the Marris to clear out. They went, and the troops lost sight of them.

Toward noon, as the detachment marched along the track which led over a dry water course up to a narrow slit in the hills, they were suddenly fired upon from in front. The hills on either side of the Pass were thronged with white-turbaned tribesmen, who were sniping at the troops with long rifles.

The colonel's men returned the fire, but most of the bullets only spat against the rock cover the hillmen crouched behind. "Phut! phut!" went the guns on the hillside; "p-ing-g! spit! spat!" came the leaden pills from every side, for the Pathans were closing up in the rear also. The men were in a trap.

"We've got to get out of this, and make a stand on higher ground, sir," said Lutyens.

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Then the men charged up one side of the valley, and drove the Marris from the top of a hill at the point of the bayonet. It was hot work. Lutyens got a bullet in his arm, and half a dozen men dropped in the valley. There was no time to get them; they lay there under the cross fire, as well as eight or ten of the Pathans.

It looked like bad business, and the hills all around simply swarmed with tribesmen who kept up a dropping fire. It didn't do much harm, the range was too great; but the troops were surrounded, and it would be hot work getting out. The Marris saw they had our fellows trapped, and played a waiting game. There were hundreds of them; the hills were alive. Tenier and Sergeant Flynn volunteered to slip through the enemy that night and bring up reinforcements.

They took a heliograph with them, because they could signal from the foothills in the morning, saving a twenty-mile tramp, and get word to the regiment quicker. They stole out in the darkness, and the men waited, not knowing whether they got through or not.

All night the tribesmen kept up a spitting fire—just enough to make rest impossible. That was their game—to keep the small troop hemmed in, and worry them to death.

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Our fellows knew what it meant—water. The hill was like an ash heap—as dry. The water bottles wouldn't fight the heat for twenty-four hours; another twenty-four and they would parch up and choke. The men of Allah on the hills knew that, too.

Of course, if Tenier didn't get through, and the balance of the regiment didn't turn up, the detachment would have to fight its way out. It would be at terrible cost—probably not a man would get through alive. They hadn't a field gun with them—nothing but their rifles; so they couldn't shell the enemy from their path. This was a serious mistake; but the colonel had evidently started out on a political mission, and considered guns an impediment to rapid travel. So they prayed hard that Tenier or the sergeant might get through.

They expected the natives to rush them just before daylight, but there was no attack—nothing but the wearing fire, the dribbling in of bullets, to keep them on edge.

The wounded and dead lay between the two forces. Once our men tried to slip down to bring in their wounded, but were driven back; twice the tribesmen crept down, but were repulsed with a stiff volley—their mission was throat-cutting.

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In the morning it was seen that the Marris had been at work during the night. Two stone *sangas* had been thrown up within fair range of our men; but Lutyens had also constructed a barricade, so honors were even.

About nine o'clock half a dozen Marris came down with a white flag—they wanted to pick up the wounded. Our fellows were glad of the chance of a truce, and the poor chaps who had lain out all night were brought in.

While this was going on, another party of eight or ten came in with a white flag also; and with them was a gigantic ram, close-clipped, and with all the glory of war paint on his strong-ribbed sides and muscular quarters. The baboo unearthed from their muddy vocabulary that they wanted to fight the Khan.

“They’re a rum lot,” said Lutyens, with his arm in a sling; “while they’ve got us hemmed in here, and hope to starve us out, they want to put in the time pleasantly by holding sports. But it will delay matters, anyway, and give Tenier a chance. If he’d been captured, we’d have heard about it, I think—he must have got through.

“We’ll fight them with the ram, won’t we, sir?” he said to the colonel. “It’ll keep things back. We’ll mark time as long as we can—I’ll

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swear the ram has just been fed, and hold the fight off for a couple of hours, till he's in good condition. He's too fat to fight, anyway—the other fellow'll do him up; their brute's as fit as a fiddle."

So, with the aid of the baboo, the thing was explained, in a fashion, and the fight held off until after dinner; the visitors, who were probably selecting the individual throats they meant to slit when they had persuaded our men to surrender their rifles later on, were fed with profuse hospitality.

It was a fine diplomatic play all round. Afzul Mulk reasoned that they were helping to eat up the provisions the troops had to subsist upon, therefore they would be starved into surrender the sooner. The colonel and his officers hoped that Tenier had escaped, and if they could delay matters with the aid of the ram long enough, the relieving force would pop in on the flank of the enemy with a machine gun or two, and save the situation.

The hillmen were receiving reënforcements all the time. They were a fine lot of blackguards, these Marris; they ate cheerily with our fellows, and viewed critically the commissariat they hoped to be placed in command of by the help of Allah and much thirst.

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Lutyens, who had taken charge of the fighting arrangements, delayed bringing out the Khan as long as he dared. At last, about two o'clock, he concluded he had reached the limit; the visitors were muttering impatiently.

A sharp lookout was kept to prevent a surprise, and the *tamasha* started. The Khan was full of it. Fighting in the camp at Sibi had been stupid play; nothing fought back—here was the sport of his lambhood. The Marris ram was keen as a fox terrier, too.

When they came together in the first round it was like the bursting of a shrapnel; but it was only a feeler evidently. They backed off a little farther next time, and with short, jerky pig jumps banged into each other. The flint horns cracked sharp and clear in the still mountain air.

As the sound went echoing up the *cañons* of the hills the tribesmen cheered with joy—it was a fight after their own hearts. The whole camp warmed to the fun; the colonel was the most excited man in the detachment.

Lutyens was new to the game, and didn't handle his ram right. One of the tribesmen, who had been watching the Khan with loving eye, jumped up and begged, with much pantomime, to be given charge of the detachment ram.

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"Let him handle him!" cried the colonel; "we've got to win, or they'll take it as an omen that they're going to beat us."

The Pathan almost cried for joy when he put his strong fingers in the Khan's whiskers. He laid his swarthy face against the ram's Roman nose, and the sheep knew him. It was Rahat Shah, the Khan's rightful owner; but our chaps didn't know that. They backed the rams among themselves. Afzul, the head man of the Marris, drew forth the colonel's fifty rupees he had tucked in his belt, and gave Squeaks to understand he wanted to gamble on the fight. Jove! if the colonel didn't take him up! Nobody had ever seen him make a bet in his life before.

The Khan's new handler played fair—played to win. Lutyens watched him close; but he didn't need that. He was a proper sportsman—they're all that. He gave the Khan a chance to get his wind; delayed each round as long as he could. That was what our fellows wanted.

The Khan was a bit the stronger, and at first got a lead over the other chap; but the hawk eyes of the natives had sized up the situation pretty well. They knew that our ram was fat, inside and out, and would tire after a bit. Their ram was as hard as nails; everything in their

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country is, men and all. He was like a fighting boar—gaunt and rough; all muscle and pluck, with horns of steel.

The Khan's charge became perceptibly less fierce; he wavered a little as they came together like rocks in an avalanche. His hind quarters drooped after each crash.

"This comes of you juniors always stuffing the beast with sugar or some cursed thing!" squeaked the colonel. "You've spoiled one of the best fights ever was."

What with preliminaries, and rests between rounds, and hard fighting, the battle lasted over an hour, when finally the Khan was smashed to the earth by a glancing blow that slipped from his horns and tore along his thick neck. He'd had enough—he knew that. Not for his old master even, not for anything, would he face the music again. The tribesmen had won.

The visitors sprang to their feet and cheered the wild battle cry of the Pathan. Up, up the hills it went, caught up and echoed from throat to throat—hundreds of them—until the whole range rang with the pæan of victory. It was impressive. Our men were awed. It was like a foreboding of disaster.

The colonel quietly handed over the rupees to Afzul. The Marris squatted on their haunches

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again; and Lutyens, to show that there was no ill will, ordered hot coffee served to them.

Rahat Shah, who had handled the Khan, got him on his feet, and started to lead him over to the little group of squatted tribesmen.

The colonel interfered. "Take the ram away from that chap," he ordered. "I believe they're trying to walk him off."

The orderly took the Khan from the Marris and put him over with our men. Rahat Shah was astonished—indignant. He hustled the orderly a little, and there was a bit of a scuffle at first; but the ram was taken away from the persistent tribesmen.

The sitting Marris muttered among themselves, and commenced to move about restlessly. Afzul was energetically trying to explain something to the baboo.

"What's the matter?" asked the colonel. "What does he say?"

"Not understanding his talk, sir," replied the baboo. "His talk not of my country, therefore not understanding proper. He wanting the sheep, sir, I think."

"That's rich," retorted the colonel; "dash his eyes! I suppose they think because the ram's beaten we won't keep him. Tell them, if you can, with my salams, that if they want him real

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bad, they can come and take him in their usual *zabardasti* way—there'll be a few dead Mussulmans before they get him, though. But don't hurry it, baboo—keep them as long as you can. I'd like to hear the music of a Gatling on their flank over there.”

Now, the baboo loved to talk—all baboos do; but the Marris didn't want talk; it was the ram they were after. Besides, they hated a baboo worse than they did the cursed Feringees, the British.

When they saw they were getting more baboo talk than ram, they exchanged a few fierce, hot words among themselves, standing defiantly erect, then turned away, anger flipping from every fold of their loose dress, and marched sullenly down the hill, across the valley, and up where crouched their fellows.

“Gad! they're mad,” said the colonel. “Wonder what it's all about? We'll get pepper now; get ready for them, major.”

Below, the valley was silent. The dead had been turned under the rubble of earth and broken stone, and the wounded brought into the lines. The sun was almost dipping behind the peaks in the west.

With set faces the men waited for the blood-thirsty rush that would come surely: either that,

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or the hiss of a shrapnel coming up the valley from the relief. Which would come first? It was time for the reënforcements, if Tenier had escaped.

They could see the tribesmen creeping closer down from the surrounding hills—drawing the death circle nearer.

“ Reserve your fire,” said the colonel sternly. “ Give it to them when you can smell them. We’ll make as good a fight as the ram did, anyway.”

“ By Jove! they’re mad clean through,” said Lutyens, as he watched the Pathans through his field glass; “ they won’t even wait for the dark; and to starve us out is too slow, evidently. There they go—sniping again,” as little white puffs of smoke darted out from the hillside like hot breath on a frosty morning, and the “ p-s-ing-g ” of the singing lead struck on his ears.

Then he swept the valley to the south with a powerful glass. Nothing moved in that direction but the white of a fluttering Marris coat, or the brown of a sheepskin vest.

Lower and lower moved the white circle of the creeping tribesmen. It was like watching the foam wash of the incoming tide.

“ Fix bayonets! ” commanded Lutyens; and

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the shining steel was clicked into place with grim earnestness.

“They don’t relish the steel,” said Lutyens; “we can give them points at that game, anyway.” It was a grim joke, for he knew well that numbers would tell in the end; and though they might be driven back once, twice, a dozen times, the Pathan wolves would come again, and again, until every throat was cut.

The foe was down in the valley now, not three hundred yards, and slipping from rock to rock—stalking their white prey.

“When they mass for the rush,” said the major to the men, “we’ll give them a volley, and another before they reach us; then it’ll be the bayonet against their big knives. Gad! I almost thought—no, it couldn’t be. I fancied I heard a bugle; but it’s one of their cursed sheep-calls, I suppose.”

The Marris were armed with smooth-worn Sniders (“gas pipes”) and the long-barreled *jezail*. More than half of them had nothing but the strong hungry knives that would rip and slash when they had broken the ranks.

Suddenly Afzul was seen to jump on a rock and wave a green and yellow banner. That was the signal for the onslaught. Pandemonium broke loose. Every rock and every hill echoed

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with a hundred tongues the fanatic Moslem cry.

"They're a noisy lot of beggars," said the colonel, "just like the Burmese; but they'll fight better, I fancy."

Like a pack of hungry wolves giving cry they started up the ascent.

"Present! steady, men — aim low! fire!" came the commands sharp and clear from the major.

A red circle of hot, belching fire darted from the black barrels of the Martinis; and the wailing hail swept down the hillside, and the white, rushing line swayed, staggered, trembled for an instant, and then swept on again, closing up the gaps that had been bitten into it by the eager teeth. The Sniders and the *jezails* vomited back an answer; but the stone barricade grabbed at the bullets, and only three men swayed drunkenly from the wall.

Halfway up the hill the Martinis coughed again; and the second volley plowed deeper and more terribly into the Moslem foe.

Again the line wavered; there was a lull; Afzul's voice could be heard bellowing like a mountain leopard at his hesitating men.

A low, moaning shriek came up the valley; there was a crash as a shrapnel burst, and an

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acre of bullets hissed and screeched as they cut through the air on the charging enemy's flank. "Boo-o-m-m," ponderously came the voice of the screw gun that had thrown the shell.

"Hurrah! the relief!" cheered Lutyens, his bared sword gleaming. "Give the hounds another volley!"

Down in the valley an English bugle was sounding the charge. "Ph-u-t-t, ph-u-t-t-ph-u-t-t!" a Gatling was chirruping, and "Boo-o-m-m!" a seven-pounder was chorusing. The advancing troops were volley firing, and the white mass of turbaned tribesmen was being rolled back like a war map.

Afzul's men had come too late—the stone wall stared at them stolidly; they broke; and fold on fold the Pathan mass was pushed back, and up through the Pass they had come down from.

"Just in time, eh?" panted Tenier, as he galloped up to the detachment.

The relief was complete. It was useless to follow the Marris among the hills without cavalry.

I had gone up with the regiment, and Tenier told me all about the trouble. There was a ton of guilt on my soul; for if I had spoken, had told of the ownership of the ram, all this might

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have been averted. How was I to break it to the colonel? I must tell him.

That night at dinner Lutyens suddenly broke in with, "Well, we had two ripping fights to-day."

"Was this the second attack?" queried Tenier.

"No, Nawaz Khan fought the first battle. We had a truce, and the fellows came down with a sheep built like a 'blue bull,' and he did up the Khan in fine shape."

"Why the thunder did they attack you this time, then, if they got the ram?" I asked.

"They didn't get him," said the colonel simply in his squeaky voice. "We wouldn't give him up."

"Great Scott! sir," I exclaimed; "you've forever blasted the name of the British as true sportsmen. The fundamental principle, sir, governing all ram fights, from Calcutta to Cabul, is that the victor takes the beaten ram."

The colonel's face turned ashy pale. That he had killed a score or more tribesmen was not the cause, for that had been a fair fight; but that he had done this thing was a disgrace—he saw that.

"More than that," I exclaimed, excited by what had been said, and seizing the opportunity,

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“the ram belonged to them in the first place. He was the pride of their tribe. Somebody looted him, probably the man who brought him into the regiment—Yusuf.”

“How do you know that, sir?” gasped the colonel.

I explained.

“What shall we do—what shall we do?” moaned the colonel helplessly.

“Jove!” exclaimed Lutyens, “we must put this right. We can’t have these beggars taking us for a lot of welchers. They fought game enough—and they were in the right, too.”

As atonement, I offered to find Afzul the next day and explain matters.

I did. Taking Tenier and a white flag, I followed up the tribesmen, and found Afzul. I explained it all.

We had trounced them, we were in force, and he realized that what I said must be true. No white man could have stolen the Khan—it must have been Yusuf.

He accompanied me back to the camp. The Khan was turned over to him, and a good indemnity paid for the dead tribesmen, for we were undoubtedly in the wrong.

“You may go through my country,” said Afzul. “The fight was a good one.”

THE BLOODING OF A GRIFFIN

BRYMNER-SMYTH was subinspector of police at Jacobabad, Beluchistan. He was also a Griffin, because youngsters in the service are so called. A Griffin costs his Majesty many sovereigns landed in India, so he is allowed seven major mistakes and many minor ones, before he is cast from the centers of utility, labeled a "king's bad bargain," and sent away to test climatic influences. And Brymner-Smyth all but rolled his seven major mistakes into one at the time he was tried in the Sibi Desert.

When Killock sent word from Hindiput that the Pathans and coolies were in mutiny, Brymner-Smyth was sent with six Punjabi police to put matters right.

The military railway, slowly crawling toward the Bolan, had as yet reached but to Jacobabad, so the police and luggage were attached to camels, and Brymner-Smyth rode his Beluchi mare to Hindiput, eighty miles away.

And because he was just a man-boy, inebriated

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with the elation of his first responsibility, the barren Sibi Desert, that men call a godless waste, was to him that morning a field of cloth of gold. Pathans and looters and mutinous coolies hold prospect of promotive service. He would be a *Bara Sahib* at Hindiput, too—the one in charge.

The way lay over a dead sea; the breast of earth was barren and without fruitfulness; the horse's hoofs bit into the soulless sand with a slipping crunch; it was a blaring mirror that reflected in his face the fierce heat his helmet shielded from above. His throat closed utterly and his lips corrugated into filelike ridges of crinkled parchment; even behind colored glasses his eyes fevered to redness. But these things, one and all, only gave the Griffin joy, for was it not the toil of emancipation?

In the afternoon of the second day he drew into a land beautiful; lakes of blue water, turquoise charms set in tawny gold; swaying palms traced like giant ferns against green hills that held, higher up, purple-hazed valleys; and slow-crawling down from the hills came camel caravans wending toward a city that must be Hindiput.

Eagerly Brymner-Smyth pushed his lean ewe-necked mare toward the land of promise; but with the coyness of a maiden the vista shrank

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before his roused desire; and presently, without reason, the wondrous art thing that was a mirage blurred in the trembling heat that quivered in the desert furnace, and he stood at the elbow of Hindiput; there, in a grassless waste, a dozen mud-walled huts, flat-topped by corrugated iron, hot beds of ophthalmia, was the white-robed city he had seen in the mirage.

At Jacobabad the Griffin's messmates, prolific in unwise humor, had enlarged upon the charms of Hindiput; priming the innocent one with false tales of rajahs' palaces and trade bazaars.

The traveler slid from his roach-backed beast, rubbed his eyes inquiringly, and then, in the fullness of his disillusionment, swore softly at the uncertainty of things in India, and the misuse that had been made of his credulity.

Then he passed to a house which rose above the others; this might be a mirage or the habitation of Killock.

As he stood in the door, a large matter of flesh swung itself from a *charpoy* and confronted him. It was Killock. And on Killock were these things—a short-sleeved banian and a pair of voluminous khaki trousers that, like a ram's horn, chronicled their age by wrinkles.

And the man-boy with the riveted name, which was a caste mark equal to the Brahmin-

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ical thread, sighed as the final mirage of a social Hindiput curled up and departed before the burly figure that was coffee-brown and huge of chest.

That was the beginning; but progression was worse. It was as though fate had stabled together a thoroughbred and a rhino.

Brymner-Smyth tied a tag of identification to the huge man which read "Navy Killock," and Navy Killock spent a day and a night—for he was sluggish of thought—over his black pipe before he evolved for the inspector "Lord Bobby." But when the name came there was no doubt about its applicability.

"'E puts on airs like a bloomin' lord, an' 'e's nothink but a bloody cop—that's what 'e is, Mister bloomin' Smith-Bounder—Lord Bobby, I'll call 'im." Then he took a swig of gin and it was settled.

It wouldn't have mattered so much had there been anything for the inspector to do, but there wasn't; his mission was inaction, which is the father of curses in India. The turbulence of the natives was but a fantasy of Killock's gin-heated imagination. He had harked back to his primary condition of life over a work discussion with some Marwari coolies, injudiciously seeking to make the matter clear to their understand-

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ing with his fists; they, being men of Marwar, took up the matter with cudgels. That was all there was to it.

Killock had been born in a caul of economy, and he had tortured this virtue till in his case it became a vice. Whatever the Griffin was in the way of verdancy, he was above meanness; and Killock, taking him as legitimate prey, drank his liquor and smoked his cheroots, and ate his provisions, until the boy walked to one side in the desert at night, and lifted up his voice to the sky that was knee-deep in stars: "Hindiput and Killock—Killock and Hindiput! My God! was there ever such a combination!"

In the Navy's bungalow, beside a thermometer, hung a penciled record with a long row of figures running from 100 to 121 in the shade—a temperature which might have set two holy fathers at each other's throats, and the Navy's covetousness and greasiness of thought added five degrees to this Sheol.

Brymner-Smyth's hyphenated name, insignia of all that Killock was not, proved an irritant, a fly blister of utterance.

"Mister Bloomin' Smith—that's wot 'e is," Killock told his pipe; "it's too bloody 'ot to wear a hovercoat on a bloke's name."

The truth was, Killock couldn't master it at

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all. "Brimmer-Smith, Captain Brim-Smithe"—a dozen such entanglements the Navy landed in when he essayed the real thing. When he was gin-loaded, which was always in the evening, he fell back on plain "Mister Smith."

When the Griffin remonstrated with serious gentleness, Killock retorted: "Wot th' 'ell's the dif'rence in this blawsted 'ole? Jus' leave the double-breasted name 'angin' on a peg with yer dress suit at 'eadquarters; it's too 'ot 'ere fer style. Comfort's a heap better'n hetiquette, I sez."

But two white men bound together in a sand-pit in a desert must foregather, and the Griffin tried cards as likely to render Killock possible at times. But the Navy thumped the table and blew the twang of his rank pipe into the inspector's face; and, the end of it all, allowed his fat fingers to manipulate the ivory counter past all toleration.

"Heavens! was there ever such a beast!" Brymner-Smyth confided to his *charpoy* as he threw himself on its rope-woven web the night Killock had cheated at whist.

The inspector had sent a written report to Jacobabad by a Pathan on a fast-riding camel, with the uselessness of his mission at Hindiput enlarged upon; but Major Eustace shoved it into

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a pigeonhole of futurity with a little contracting of his grim features.

The major had a hobnailed liver, and Brymner-Smyth had been just a touch irritating with his unclimatic desire for endeavor. The India Office had a disconcerting way of sending out shoals of youngsters, as yearlings are sent up to the sales at Newmarket, and it was the duty of wearied elders in the service to deposit them in harmless places. The major had done fairly well by the Griffin that came his way, in side-tracking him at Hindiput, he thought.

So Brymner-Smyth sat day after day on the bank of earth the coolies had thrown up from the huge tank they were digging, seeking to disentangle from the nebulous sky line a real camel man bringing him orders of release. And always on the rim of one horizon a ball of white-hot metal shot into the air, and climbed, soul-searing, over their heads for hours and hours till it dropped from sight on the other rim. That was the ever-recurrent form of a day in Hindiput.

Sometimes Navy Killock would come and sit beside the boy, and, oyster-like, open up and vomit forth pearls of thought.

"Wot th' 'ell is the Gov'ment goin' to do with this 'ole in the ground—that's what beats me. They ain't no water 'ere, an' it never rains,

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an' I'm blowed if I see the good of a tank where there ain't no water."

Brymner-Smyth didn't know, and said so; and Killock, weary with the stupendous, unsolvable mystery, would wind up with "some hoffice bloke's got the hidea as a tank's needed 'ere, I s'pose, an' I reckons if they pays me my bit fer lookin' arter the job, it's no haffair of mine."

The inspector might have remained marooned on the sands of Hindiput till in desperation he committed hara-kiri, had not a complication with tribesmen up Dehra way made a sudden call for men on the head office.

So to the waiting one came a blue envelope with orders to report at Dehra on the 20th. Also there was official inkling of stirring service ahead.

That was the 16th. Dehra was in the foothills, two days' march away, which left two days of Killock. No wonder the boy took a handful of cigars to the man who had worn his patience threadbare.

When he told Killock of his going, the Navy's pig eyes closed to a narrow slit. "That's a rum go, Cap'n Smythers. Who's goin' to keep the black *soors* from lootin'? That's wot I ask the Guv'ment. They'll *puckorow* heverythink, an' if I hinterfere, wot do I git?—a bloomin' butcher knife shoved hinto my belly."

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The Navvy swallowed a glass of gin, drew the back of his hand across his mouth, and squinted suspiciously at the inspector. Had Lord Bobby been playing him double—been writing to get away without consulting him.

And as Brymner-Smyth swung back to his own hut, Killock, watching him going, muttered: "That blawsted toff wants to get back where there's swells; 'e don't care if I'm killed, an' my ole 'oman an' the kids starve."

Then he looked at the thin penciled line of blood driven from the heart of the thermometer by the fierce heat till it rested atop at 117, and exclaimed, "God! wot a 'ole to fry in!" [The he went out and hurled strange Hindoo-stanee oaths at a Pathan camel man who understood only *Pushtu*, which was just as well for the Navvy.]

The record of Killock's gentle ways would be as useless in this story as the history of a river *mugger's* existence, were it not that no man could judge the Griffin when he did the thing that he did if Killock's part were left out.

On the next day, the 17th, two natives lay sick in the cooly lines, and Killock, whom the fates had ordained to the misplacement of all things, swore they were malingering.

But Baboo Ramchunder, the Bengali apothecary,

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cary, diagnosed the cases according to the verbose method of his kind. "The pathology of their sick is vertigo, also prostration of appetite, because they absteme from rice," he said.

This seemed to settle the thing, and Brymner-Smyth thought no more of the sick coolies, because he was on the edge of going away and the things of Hindiput were things to be left behind.

At noon on the 18th his Punjabis left with the luggage-laden camels. They would camp overnight at a *serai* on the road, and the inspector, leaving before daylight next morning, would overtake them.

An hour after the Punjabis had left, the heart of Hindiput stood still with fear. Panic, that speaks all languages, that is as universal as a sob, touched the hearts of the Pathans and the Marwari coolies, the big, flabby heart of Navvy Killock, and—and crept a little into the soul of the Griffin.

One man was dead, and the baboo, who was a doctor out of courtesy of speech, had now discovered it was cholera.

"It is this way with the pestilential affliction, that when patient is defunct diagnosis is absolute, and cholera has smited Ram Baksh and also Dhiloo, who is his brother." Thus he summed up the startling situation.

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The Griffin was but a boy, this we must remember. In battle he would have ducked at the screech of the first shell and ducked again until he had been blooded. His face went white, and his soul ducked at the baboo's patter.

In an hour Hindiput was a death trap. The hot air vibrated with fear—the breath of the black scourge seemed in every man's nostrils. The Pathans fled with their camels, and when men sought conveyance they drew long knives and drove them off. Anyone might have germs of disease on his person, and those who could get away sought to flee alone; to wander out afoot on the desert was worse than to remain.

The frightened ones had seen Ram Baksh, his blue fingers driven nail-deep into the palms of his watery hands; his bloodless lips festooned with the bubbling froth of death as he lay rigid as steel, his head and knees drawn together.

And the baboo, great in incapacity, knowing not of the destroying thing, had given jalap, which was as efficacious as the sufferer's invocation to Siva the Destroyer for mercy. And another man was now on his back—either of fear or the scourge—and the natives were sore afraid.

Brymner-Smyth was practically a "casual"; in actuality he had removed himself from the

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office of custodian in Hindiput; his men were gone, and he was but one who ate and slept within its mud walls.

Sitting in his hut, the boy put this very clearly to himself. Then he passed to other things—to a vine-covered brick cottage in the Surrey Hills where a silver-haired woman prayed every night for his safe home-coming. That was something also proving that he was not of Hindiput now, and should follow out his orders and go.

Yes, he was afraid of the horrible thing; why lie to himself and say he was not? Was there ever any man who quailed not a little before this hydra-headed cobra that struck unseen?

It was like running away, though. Yes, again, why lie—it was.

Then the huge form of Killock darkened his door, and the Navy's voice, unsteady because of fear and gin, took up the boy's line of thought.

"Salam, Cap'n Smyther—Brym! ain't this jus' orful—bloomin' orful I calls it!" The Navy dropped to a stool and drew his sleeveless arms across the top of his bullet head that was a lake of sweat fountains.

"Why don't y'u go from this 'ole, Cap'n? Wot's the use of yer takin' chances?"

"I don't know what to do—I ought to stay

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and see the thing through," the boy said with a query in his voice.

Killock tipped his huge body forward on the stool till his alcoholic breath blew a mist in the boy's face; his small eyes were like red beads in a yellow matrix, fear and cunning jostling each other in their narrow holding.

"Look ee 'ere, sir, 'tain't yer hoffice to fight cholera no more'n it's mine. Yer can't do nothink here but get tuk yerself; an' the Guv'-ment wouldn't thank y'u if y'u was dead, would they? Y'u shift to-night, d'ye 'ear?"

"I must do my duty whichever way it lies."

The words rang true enough, but Killock's ears were adder's ears, deaf with the poison of fright.

"To 'ell wi' dooty! ain't you got no women folks to 'ome—no mother or sweetheart waitin' fer you?"

The boy looked curiously at the fat man, who was full of unconscious tragedy. Had he misjudged the barbarian—had Killock really a good heart? He was soon answered.

"That's my hidea of hit. My ol' woman an' the kids, they're a-livin' in a cottage hout Clapham Road w'y, an' there's roses a-bloomin' in the garden, an' marigolds, an' the robins is 'oppin' habout, an' the larks a-singin'—that's

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wot she sens in a letter. An' be I goin' t' die in this 'ere God-forsaken 'ole, an' git planted like a cooly in th' sand, wi' rocks atop to keep the jackals an' hyeners from rootin' me hup? Nex' year I was a-goin' 'ome—d'ye 'ear?—a-goin' 'ome to th' ol' woman. That's where I wants t' die—in ol' Hengland, where they puts roses an' white flowers on a man's grave!"

The boy held his breath; the dreadful earnestness of the frightened Killock was dramatic.

"It's hin the water wot that pagan Pathan brings in his filthy leather bottles on his camels. That's why I've had me tot o' gin—I knowed it 'ud come. An' a man wot stays 'ere might be tuk in a hour. An' s'pose I'm tuk wi' it, th' niggers'll clear hout—not a mother's son of 'em'll come near a white man when 'e's tuk, 'cause they're white-livered swine. Y'u take my word fer it, Cap'n, you've got yer horders to go, an' jus' cut aw'y from th' bloody 'ole—it stinks wi' th' cholera. An' I'm goin' wi' you."

Brymner-Smyth knew—the silk purse was but a sow's ear.

"You've got to stay here—you're in charge," he said deliberately.

"I'm not goin'—'ow d'you make that hout? I hain't got no right t' stay 'ere an' die—I hain't

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no doctor; the baboo's doctor 'ere—'e's paid t' take chances."

"But you're in charge of the baboo; you keep the medicine chest. If you leave, he'll clear out. You're responsible."

"Responsible be blowed! Will the Guv'ment be responsible for my ol' woman an' kids if I die?"

"I don't know anything about that," Brymner-Smyth answered; "but you can't go with me. God, man, it would be deserting your post, and I would be a party to it!"

"Desertin'! hain't you desertin'? You're like the *Bara Sahib* at 'eadquarters, 'e'll be at the mess drinkin' 'is hiced peg; an' wot does 'e care if I'm 'ere dyin' o' cholera?—no more do you. See 'ere, youngster"—and Killock clutched the boy's jacket—"we'll cut aw'y together. If you st'y 'ere you'll die, sure as 'eaven. We're 'uddled like pigs in a sty, an' wot one's got all'll get. I'm caught hin a trap, I tell you. 'Ow'm I goin' to get a 'undred miles in the desert?—I'd 'ave sunstroke. Take me wi' you till we catch hup yer men—I'll pay hanythink you like fer a lift on a camel."

"Go back to your bungalow," Brymner-Smyth answered, "and let me think this horrible thing all out."

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Killock obeyed without a word, and the boy went through a process that he called thinking. It was hardly that—it was more like listening to the bells.

Even Killock had said he ought to go, and that was something; in reality, he was afraid—which was everything.

Panic impregnates the air with germs that poison every living thing that breathes them. So the boy, into whose being these imps of unreason had crept, groping blindly, became possessed of but two ideas: he would go away, it was his duty; and Killock must remain, it was his duty.

When it grew dark, Brymner-Smyth put the saddle on his mare and rode toward Killock's bungalow. He couldn't quite go away without speaking to the Navy; it meant another scene, but he couldn't help it.

The scene was a scene.

When Hindiput was without cholera, Killock drank much gin; now, because of the scourge, he poured it down.

It was little short of a madman that lurched from the bungalow, and learning from the inspector's lips that he was to remain, called the curses of all gods, Christian and pagan, upon the milk-sustained babe in the saddle.

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"I'm tuk now, I tell you," he said, "my ol' woman'll curse you to her dyin' day. There's gripes in my belly now as 'ud cut th' 'eart out of a ox. You're cuttin' hit—you're a hoffer as runs aw'y an' leaves a Tommy to get shot."

Fear guided the vocabulary of Killock. It veered him as the wind twists a weathercock; one minute the inspector was to go, the next he was cursed for not remaining.

"I'm sorry, but my staying will do no good; besides, I can't—I've got my orders."

As he spoke the inspector chirruped to his horse. With an oath, Killock lurched forward and grasped the snaffle ring of the bridle.

"Look 'ere, Mister Cop, I goes wi' you, or you st'ys wi' me. I hain't stickin' alone to th' sinkin' ship—'ear that?"

"Take your hand off the bridle!"

"'Ere, come hout o' the saddle!" and Killock's disengaged hand clawed at the boy's gaiters, fumbling for a finger-hold.

Brymner-Smyth leaned over the pommel, and the butt of his riding whip landed on the gorilla-like wrist that was dragging the horse's nose to its shoulder. The Navvy's arm dropped to his side, where it hung limp as a stocking on a clothesline. The mare swerved at the sudden freeing of her head and plunged forward.

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The boy let her go. In his ears the speed-the-guest of Killock: "You 'it me, you swipe! Come back 'ere an' I'll claw yer 'eart out, you cowardly swaggering bobby!"

The mare was galloping, and the passion words came in little puffs, and presently were obliterated by distance; the last sound reaching the boy from the mud walls of pestilence was "coward."

The mare's shoeless hoofs echoed the dismal word from the sunburned crust of the desert—"Cowardly coward—cowardly coward!" the galloping refrain, and all because the rider was handicapped with a lead cloth of doubt.

In half a mile the mare shifted her fore legs and slipped into the shuffling trot of the country-bred. The road was a furrow worn by the pad feet of camels, reaching toward the Sulieman's where was Dehra.

The boy's head rested on his chest, thinking, thinking in a blurred way that led to nothing, his eyes seeing not the star-jeweled sky above that was a vast aigrette, almost musical in its brilliancy; below, the desert, gray in the night light, was like smooth waters.

As though he had slept in the saddle, without knowledge of the two hours that had gone, suddenly from the gray waste a blank mud wall

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confronted him—it was the *serai* wherein the Punjabis were to await his coming.

One of the men took the horse, and the inspector, scarce speaking, threw himself on his blankets and tried to shut out the scene that caused his eyes to burn.

Sleep! It passed without claiming from Punjabi to Punjabi, and then mocked him from their faces of content.

Why did his mind wrestle with the problem he had settled—he was obeying orders? Also, he was a coward—some voice that was a lying voice screamed it through a hole in the mud wall, or perhaps it was one of the sleepers had said it, or perhaps it was an echo of the drunken Killock's voice.

Brymner-Smyth rose, turned low the lantern, slipped from the *serai*, and out on the desert; asked the stars—or perhaps it was the Arranger-of-the-Stars—for some sign that would smother to silence the voices of doubt. But in the book of stars is written nothing of Griffins, or cholera, or fear, and on the desert is stamped but desolation. He went back to his blanket, his mind numbed to uselessness as a guide to right.

At two o'clock the desert trail cast something in at the door. It was a Beluchi camel man,

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with a desire to talk of how the black scourge was even then at Hindiput.

Allah! whose name be ever blessed, but he had come near to disaster. He had stopped at the accursed village, and at once a Hindoo dog, a baboo of animal descent, had besought him for conveyance out of Hindiput. The sahib, fat, and a wine drinker, had been stricken—perhaps even now he was dead. Yes, the baboo *hakim* had said the sahib had cholera, and that he would surely die.

The boy had been asking for a sign from the stars, or out of the desert. It had been given him.

“Quick! saddle the mare!” he commanded.

“Huzoor, if the captain sahib goes to Hindiput, this evil thing will come upon the sahib beyond doubt,” his men answered.

“Will any one volunteer to go with me?” Brymner-Smyth asked. “Of the Sirkar’s orders, you may go to Dehra; of my asking, will any go back to the saving of lives?”

But the Punjabis answered that they were men of large families—if they died their little babas would starve. Also the Sirkar’s orders were to be obeyed, because they ate the salt of the Sirkar.

“Who is at Dehra I know not,” the inspector told his men, “but make report there

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that I have gone back to Hindiput because of cholera, and will come again to Dehra when——”

The boy stopped to think, and one of his Punjabis carried on the interrupted sentence with, “the captain sahib will come to Dehra in the pleasure of Kudah” (God).

Brymner-Smyth mounted his mare and rode back in the camel rut that was a road, and fear had fallen from him and the panic had passed. He was blooded in cholera, and the problem was settled, and, hard riding, through his set teeth he prayed that he might come, in the way of atonement, to the side of Killock while still he lived.

The light was breaking as the inspector, coming to the stricken village, met a white-clothed figure puddling along the road. It was the baboo. The Bengali's jaw dropped in astonished fear when he saw the sahib.

“Where are you off to?” Brymner-Smyth asked, as he pulled up his mare.

The baboo blinked his big solemn eyes and wrestled with his wits for an answer.

“Deserting?”

“No, sahib, taking constitutional.”

“Don't lie—you're running away. How is the sahib—is he dead?”

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"Yes, your honor, he is defunct. Coma coming, and, notwithstanding injunction from me, Killock Sahib is taking copious draughts of gin, and then yielded up the ghost."

"And you got scared and cleared out."

"No, your honor. I'm a poor man, not learned with knives and fighting. And cooly mans telling they will kill because I give them bad medicine, they say. Because of that wickedness on the cooly mans' part, I have come out here to summon help."

"You're a great liar, baboo," Brymner-Smyth answered, "and you ought to be kicked." Already he was forgetting his own fright that had been. "Come with me; we must do what we can," he added.

And as they rounded the end of Killock's bungalow they heard the dead man's voice calling, "Baboo!—oh, I'm sick! Baboo!"

Brymner-Smyth looked at Ramchunder, and he, shifting uneasily under the glance, said, "Coma has passed, but the sahib will defunct soon."

They passed into the house. Killock was on his *charpoy*, and the cholera had eaten up the repulsive coarseness of his form until he was gaunt.

At sight of the inspector, his dull, heavy eyes

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brightened. "You—you've come back, cap'n. God be thanked! I'm tuk—I knowed it 'ud come." He burst into tears and sobbed like a babe.

Brymner-Smyth put his hand on the sick man's forehead. "Don't give up, Killock; we'll pull you through all right," he said.

"I'm done for," the Navy answered plaintively. "God help us; my ol' woman 'ill——"

Then the sickness doubled him up, and for ten minutes he writhed and was *sick*.

The Griffin had a strong polo wrist, but he was a babe in the matter of illness.

"Great Heavens, baboo! What do you stand there blinking for? Give the man something—he'll die on our hands."

"Yes, sar, I am cogitate diagnose for proper draught. Best authorities advise chlorodyne. But already, sahib, I have given planty big dose, and always the sahib redelivering back again. Also, he is reproach most blasphemous."

The baboo poured much medicine down the sick man, who now, subdued by fear, did not curse the physician.

Ignorant though he was of the effects of cholera, Brymner-Smyth fancied that the Navy's bullock-like constitution was making a great fight against the disease; he certainly was not in

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the state of collapse the baboo had pictured, and the boy's coming seemed to have lessened the fear that would surely have killed him had he been left alone.

" 'Eavens, it burns! " Killock wailed, as the liquid scoria singed its way down his throat. " I've suffered hawful, sir." He lay still for a little, panting with the pain. The morphine element in the drug soothed him now, and, turning from his immediate fear of dissolution, he harked back to what had gone before.

" I've been a bit rough, cap'n, an' I begs to 'pologize. All along o' the drink I called y'u a bloody coward, an' 'ere y'u are a 'ero, takin' chances o' th' cholera an' a-nursin' me. I don't want to die wi' no hard feelin's——"

" There, there, don't say anything," the boy interrupted. " You're not going to die—we won't let you. I lost my temper like a young ass, and I want you to forgive me."

" It was a-comin' to me all along o' my swearin'. If—if I pegs hout, ye'll see that heverythink is done proper, won't y'u; an' you'll send th' papers an' things 'ome to th' ol' woman? "

Then the opiate—the baboo had administered the dose for an ox—drowsed Killock, and babbling sleepily of roses and marigolds and

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the "ol' woman," he fell asleep, and the boy, taking the baboo, went to the cooly lines.

The frightened Ramchunder's story of mutinous natives was, like the rest of it, all a lie, engendered by his fear of the inspector's anger at his desertion.

And the cholera was spreading but slowly: three men stricken since the death of the first patient. With pathetic resignation some of the sick men's relatives still clung to them, while the other coolies were scattered about on the desert beyond the mud walls of the village.

The boy's hour of trial had passed, and now he had no fear. Ashamed of the weakness that had come to him, he was even reckless. More than once the baboo cautioned him as he did something for the stricken coolies.

As Brymner-Smyth, followed by Ramchunder, passed from one hut to another, he saw a camel swinging up the road from Jacobabad. Well he knew that easy pacing shamble—it was a Bikaner racing camel, carrying some one who came in haste. The long spindly legs wove in and out with the rapidity of urged speed, and in the double saddle, behind the driver, sat a European.

Brymner-Smyth stepped into the shade of a hut, leaned against its mud wall and waited.

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The camel raced to where he stood, and at a pull from the nose cord knelt with bubbling remonstrance at his feet. Then the sahib, whose face was dust-plastered till it was like a terracotta mask, flung himself from the saddle, and the boy saw that it was Surgeon Saunders from headquarters. "Abrupt" Saunders, as irreverent India called him.

"Halloo! Gad, glad you're here, youngster," the surgeon cried eagerly, wiping the perspiration from his forehead. "Knew you'd got the route, and was afraid you were off to Dehra. Half-expected to find no one but dead and dying here—these fellows get panicky when cholera comes."

"How'd you know of it, sir?"

"Camel man brought *khubber* (news) to Jacobabad; s'pose he cleared out from it—I've ridden all night. Is it bad—is it *pukka* Asiatic cholera, baboo—many dead? Any of your Punjabis down, inspector?"

"My men have gone to Dehra," Brymner-Smyth answered, and to himself he answered, "Thank God, I haven't!"

"By Jove, youngster, that's pluck!—sent them out of harm's way and faced the thing yourself, eh? 'Tisn't every Griff' would do that first time of asking."

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The boy flushed and squirmed uneasily under the praise.

"It's a wonder you didn't bolt, baboo."

Then also Ramchunder squirmed and looked apprehensively at the inspector; but they were both in the same boat, and silence was a jewel-studded ring of gold.

The surgeon unshipped the medicine case from the camel's back, saying cheerily, "Let's get to work, baboo—where are the cases?"

"Only three?" he said presently, when he had seen the stricken ones. "That's good; we'll check it. One will die sure, his spleen's the size of a Cheddar cheese; that itself would kill him. We may pull the other two through though."

"Also Killock Sahib is prostrate with this affliction," the baboo said, when the surgeon had finished his examination of the three.

"What! a European down? Where is he? Lead the way, baboo."

"Yes, sar," Ramchunder answered, as they made their way to the bungalow. "Inspector Sahib here is nurse Killock Sahib like his own female mother. Already the patient is defunct many times of coma and complication if Inspector Sahib does not preserve his life. All night Inspector Sahib giving medicine and keeping from decease the sahib who is inoculated

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with cholera. Also, I am make professional effort to save the patient."

Ramchunder was lying with tortuous facility to the end that Brymner-Smyth might be mollified into silence.

The little surgeon whisked about and said: "Gad, boy! this affair won't hurt you any in the service—I'll take care of that in my report. I knew a cub once that acted differently."

The inspector was in agony. He cried in despair, "Sir, I don't deserve——"

"Tut, tut, man—modest, eh? That won't do in India—not in the police, anyway. If you'd cleared out you'd have got cashiered. You're here at your post, and that's the way it goes in my report."

"Yes, sar," broke in the baboo hurriedly, for fear the inspector would speak again, "also I am retaining official post, and every cooly plenty much afraid, too, your honor."

"In here, is he?"

They were at the door of the bungalow. The surgeon stalked briskly to the *charpoy*, on which lay Killock.

Brymner-Smyth waited breathlessly, watching the surgeon's face. For days he had literally loathed this rough man, and now he felt as though a brother's life hung in the balance.

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Three minutes of investigation, and then Saunders, facing about, his gray eyes piercing Ramchunder, asked, "Have you been treating this man for cholera, baboo?"

"Yes, your honor; giving plenty medicine; because of this he is not prematurely deceased."

"Baboo, you're a confounded fool. This man has no more cholera than I have—he's got a bad dose of funk, and has lushed gin till he's nearly in the D. T.'s."

"Wot's that, doctor—be'n't I got cholera?" and Killock, swinging his legs to the floor, sat up and blinked incredulously at the surgeon.

"No, you haven't, worse luck. You've nearly stopped your heart going with gin and panic."

With a sigh of relief Navvy Killock fell back on the bed exclaiming, "God bless yer 'eart, doctor, my ol' 'oman 'ill be glad."

And in the bungalow fate had arrayed a safe trinity of silence, Baboo, Navvy, and Griffin.

THE CAPTURE OF SHEITAN

IF a man go into a dark pantry and drink from the first bottle he puts his hand on, he may get wine, or stove polish, or cream, or disinfectant. If he stand well with the gods he may get cream, but the average explorer will hit upon the bottle of disinfectant.

Many offices in India are filled on this dark-pantry plan; and the office of police nabob of Calcutta had drawn a queer decoction for its head. Officially, he was not called police nabob; that is only a story-teller's license. This story is about the time Eden-Powell was nabob.

People asked why he had been pushed up to that place; but nobody answered them, and they passed on to other things.

The nabob was always discovering something—some tremendous conspiracy among the natives. If some caste took to painting their knees crimson, that meant another mutiny was on the tapis, and if Eden-Powell didn't watch sharply the British Raj would be swept out of an Indian existence.

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When Sen Mullick gave the *nautch* (dance) out at Hathabad, near Calcutta, Eden-Powell felt that the time had come for him to distinguish himself. A contemplative goat would have characterized the thing he did as stupid, but Powell felt that he had received an inspiration.

Sen Mullick was one of the black sheep the nabob had written down as second cousin to Nana-Sahib. At this *nautch* there would be some mischief hatched, and he'd find out all about it for himself.

That was why he got the disguise. It was a decorative thing—this disguise—a long, unkempt beard and wig, purchased in detachments from different hairdressers; and an up-country native's outfit of clothes, silk-embroidered vest and all.

Not a soul knew about it but the nabob himself. When he had saved the empire, and could place his hand on the shoulder of the leader of the new revolt, he would declare himself, but not till then.

The beard bothered him a bit—also the wig. They weren't sufficiently attachable, it seemed to him; the soft wires passing over his ears were quite inadequate to the desired stability of the make-up; so he had his bearer bring him from

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the bazaar an adhesive compound warranted to cement oil and water together.

Eden-Powell lived at the big hotel, and the night of the *nautch* at Mullick's place he went to dinner in evening dress, as usual.

A man can't have all these big things on his mind and contain them without showing a bit queer; so when the nabob disappeared after dinner he left behind, somehow, an impression that he was going a trifle dotty. It was probably a touch of sun. That is a common enough thing in India; so it would not have mattered much if it had not been used rather extensively in trying to account for the sudden disappearance of Powell later on.

When he left the table he went to his room, packed his disguise in a hand bag, slipped quietly down the stairs, passed the *durwan*, walked a block, and engaged a *gharry* (carriage) just by the entrance to Government House. He had done all this in so methodical a manner that the elation of success already began to creep into his marrow. By Jove! if the thing came off he'd get a "C. S. I." or some other tag labeling him as a great man in that land of great men.

The lean, coffee-colored driver of the *gharry* stretched over in his high-perched seat and looked closely at the sahib who had ordered him

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to drive to Sen Mullick's. That was diplomatic; for it was a good four miles to Mullick's place, and some of the sahibs were painfully indifferent as to their ability to pay for the luxury of a cab. The look satisfied Sunda. The sahib was round-faced and fat, therefore prosperous; the clothes were such as capitalists wore.

Satisfied as to the prospect of pay, Sunda labored faithfully with expressive Hindoo adjectives and a long-lashed whip at the skinny *tats* (ponies) that pulled his *gharry*.

Inside, Powell nabob attached himself to his disguise. It was a laborious undertaking, inducing much profane thought, for the gum arabic, or whatever he had got from the bazaar, clung to everything it touched with an appalling persistency. A porous plaster was like the touch of velvet as compared with the amorous embrace of the wig and beard on Powell's head and face. He felt that whatever else befell, the hirsute part of his disguise would stick to him. Also was he tolerably certain of the lasting qualities of the tan skin dye he rubbed on face and hands.

He chuckled softly when he thought of the consternation it would spread among the conspirators when they knew that the police nabob had been among them.

When Sunda arrived at Mullick's he jumped

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down, opened the *gharry* door, and peered into the interior with a broad smile of welcome on his face for the fat, chubby, youthful sahib, who had done him the honor of selecting his *gharry*.

An old man, who could have given many points in disreputable appearance to a hill fakir, emerged from the inner darkness. Sunda drew back with a weird feeling of most uncomfortable astonishment. He took another look into the *gharry* for the fat sahib with the pleasant face. He had gone—vanished. There was only the disheveled thing in much-tangled hair and native garb.

Then Sunda knew. The passenger he had carried was *Sheitan*, the evil spirit, who sometimes rode with *gharry wallas* before a great ill fell upon them.

The driver's lean, big-jointed knees tipped toward each other in drunken desolation. He clung to the door of the *gharry*, and steadied himself, as a harsh, thick voice muttered from the mastic-matted beard the order, "*Bhito!*" (wait for me).

Eden-Powell passed into Mullick's *compound* (garden), and Sunda climbed wearily up to the battered seat of his arklike vehicle. There is not much charm in the ungilt life of a *ticca gharry walla*, but at that moment the misery of

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Sunda's existence was intensified a hundredfold. Why had *Sheitan* selected him as a victim host? Years before, Sunda had sent his child wife to sleep with a dose of *datura* (poison), but it was so long ago that it could not be because of that. Even Baloo, who drove the big chestnut horse with the white face, and had also brought a fare to Mullick's *nautch*, could offer him no consolation when he told of the Satanic passenger. "It will bring you evil, brother," Baloo said. "It is always that way when he rides—evil, evil, nothing but evil."

Then Baloo thought of something. "We will go and see Baboo Chunder Dey. He knows of these things, for they are written in the books he reads—those that are of our speech, and also those that have come over the black water from *Bilati* (England)."

Where one baboo is thin, nine are fat and ponderous. Chunder Dey was one of the nine-tenths, and his mind of a greasy solemnity. "If they both said it was *Sheitan*, it might even be so, for the incongruity of this thing was expiated upon in the theosophical and metaphysical publications." That was what Baboo Dey said with grandiloquent unction, for next to *ghee-battered* food the baboo loves complex English. Sunda saw at once that Chunder Dey

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understood the thing. Sunda's simple ways were no match for the Evil One, but with Baboo Chunder it was quite different.

Chunder pulled at his *hookah* (pipe) in reflective gasps. The *hookah* bubbled back like a laden camel, and the drivers waited.

"Why not catch this *budmash* (bad fellow)?" asked Chunder Dey at length. "There will be much gain in that—also honor. If *Sheitan* is reincarnated, and gets into your *gharry* again, Sunda, we may catch him."

And while Eden-Powell sat among the others and watched the *nautch* and listened for words of sedition, the baboo gathered unto himself twelve lusty hirelings from the bazaar and instructed them as to the capture of Sunda's passenger. He carefully concealed from them the fact that this was supposed to be *Sheitan*.

When Eden-Powell left the *nautch* in disgust at the paucity of mutinous conspiracies he found Sunda waiting for him. He got into the *gharry*, and about a mile out ran into a real, live, up-to-date mutiny. He had discovered it in reality; his long-dreamed-of revolt had materialized. That India was in a blaze from one end to the other he never doubted; but what concerned him more immediately was that he was considerably mauled, most effectually bound and

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gagged by means of an evil-smelling breech cloth shoved into his mouth, carried off, and cooped up in a little heathen temple called Ootypara.

The capture had been most successful. Sunda was overjoyed; he promised to carry Chunder Dey back and forth to the city free of charge for a whole year.

Eden-Powell's bag containing the evening clothes had been left in his *gharry*—that was all that was left of the round, fat sahib the Evil One had spirited away. Sunda took the clothes down to the Hugli, and threw them in the river. The bag he sold in Rada Bazaar for three rupees, and thus secured payment of his fare in a roundabout way.

A sampan boatman fished up the clothes and turned them over to a policeman. The policeman took them to the station, and there was read on the band "Eden-Powell." Also Eden-Powell was missing. It was really useless to look for him, for was not all this proof that he had drowned himself? Everybody suddenly remembered that the nabob had been queer for a long time. The second mutiny fad had unhinged his mind to a certainty, and the night he had disappeared he had been quite mad at dinner—quite mad; all remembered that. To drag

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the Hugli would be like dragging the clouds—as useless. A six-mile current and a flood and ebb tide made an undertow that sucked down big ships when they touched bottom as though they were eggshells.

Eden-Powell was drowned; there was no doubt whatever about that. The notice went out, and a new man was put in his place. Chunder Dey read of these things, and fed his prisoner, *Sheitan*, through a hole in the door of the temple at Ootypara, and in nowise connected him with the nabob of the Calcutta police.

That Eden-Powell was furious is one way of putting it. He even tore down little bits of plaster from the strong, brick walls in his rage, and shied them at the fat, greasy face of Chunder Dey as he gazed at him through the square opening in the door. But that made no difference to the baboo.

It took his mind many days to determine what he should do with his captive. At first Powell concealed his identity; it would hardly do to have it known that he had been shut up by a Bengali baboo. His prestige would be gone, and he would simply have to leave the force.

At last, when he saw that there was small prospect of getting out, he told Chunder Dey

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that he was the police nabob. At this the baboo smiled solemnly and said:

"Eden-Powell, the police nabob, is dead. He drowned himself in the river, and they have found his body. I am a 'B. A.' and have read these things in the publications."

"Who the deuce am I, then?" asked the prisoner.

"You are the Evil One," answered the baboo, blinking his cow eyes at Powell.

Powell tried to remove the beard, but it was like a fresco that had been set in mortar. The skin he might pull off, but there was no severing the hair from it. His disguise had been a most emphatic success.

Many natives heard of the capture of the Evil One, and came and stared with charming unconventionality at Powell, and passed complimentary remarks. The nabob was a good linguist, and these remarks revealed themselves to him in all the beauty of the native vernacular. The trend of most of the criticisms on his personal appearance was that he was not even a respectable-looking *Sheitan*—did not come up to their conception of that awful incarnation.

Then the baboo sat down and wrote a letter to the "Powers" in Calcutta anent his captive. He knew enough of official life to realize that

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if he hoped for any *kudos* (glory) for himself in the thing he must get at the chief magistrate, else the underlings would cheat him out of the credit of it; so he addressed his letter to the viceroy.

Of course, the baboo was clear enough as to what he meant to convey in his epistle, but it can't be said that the production elucidated that point very satisfactorily. He wrote:

“By your Excellency's providential favor, last night the Satanic ruler of the place where also Pluto will catch your Excellency's enemies, did come among us at the time of Sen Mullick's *nautch*. I, who am Baboo Chunder Dey, B.A., am solicitous of an appointment in a Government office by the favor of the sahibs, did advise Sunda to forcibly take possession of said *Sheitan*.

“Also in said *gharry* was the bag, which I have not taken, or perhaps Sunda has sold.

“Your Excellency will know that this agent of Pluto, who is *Sheitan*, did project himself from the body of a fat sahib, and is even now, with hirsute adornments like your Excellency has seen, a much penitent fakir.

“Your humble petitioner craves and humbly begs that your Excellency will advise as to the adjustment or otherwise of the Evil Spirit who is now in the possession of your slave.”

That was pretty much the state of the letter signed by Chunder Dey, and delivered by hand at Government House.

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The secretary to the viceroy read it more or less, and was on the point of consigning it to the wastebasket when he remembered that the viceroy had a penchant for gathering unique and original manuscript as evolved from the brain of a baboo; so he submitted it to her Majesty's representative with the remark that the writer was evidently a large consumer of *bhang*, or opium, or both.

Every viceroy has some predominant fad, and Lord Roma's was the ever-engaging investigation of native character as allied to things spiritual. There was an incongruous air about this idea of a Bengali baboo having captured the King of Evil that tickled the viceroy's fancy immensely.

He sent for Chunder Dey. The baboo left his *durwan* to guard Eden-Powell, and presented himself before Lord Roma, feeling that, at last, the gods had sent him fortune.

The august presence of the ruler of all the Indies unnerved him, and his account of the capture of *Sheitan* was a marvelous bit of disjointed imagination. The thing he had captured by the aid of twelve stout henchmen had descended from the clouds to the top of Sunda's *gharry*. Sunda, who always spoke the truth, would bear him out in that, he asserted. That

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was near to the house of Sen Mullick. Then the thing that was assuredly *Sheitan* had one minute been like a sahib, and the next like a dog, and finally it was an evil-looking fakir.

Everybody had run away because their livers turned to water in fright; only he, Chunder Dey, had remained, and captured this that was *Sheitan*. No one had helped him, because they were afraid; only the twelve stick men had been of assistance at the time of putting him in the temple which is at Ootypara. He had done all this for the good of the sahibs and their religion; and if his Excellency would be kind enough to pass an order for his appointment in the revenue department it would be well.

Taken altogether, it seemed to be enough to interest even the viceroy. So Lord Roma ordered that a policeman be sent out to bring in this crazy fakir whom Chunder Dey had locked up in the temple. "They may kill the poor fellow, you know," he said to Lord Dick, the secretary.

An order was passed to police constable "C 914" to proceed in a *gharry* to Hathabad and bring in the native fakir from the Ootypara temple.

"C 914" was a red-faced Irishman lately recruited from a sailing ship, and he felt con-

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siderably the importance of this his first real constabulary commission. When Eden-Powell saw the rosy face of "914" at the wicket in his prison door, he called out blithely, "How are you, my man?"

"No familiarity, ye h'athen," responded "914" scornfully. "Say 'Sir' when ye see a sahib, or ye may get yer fuzzy head cracked, ye black spalpeen."

The nabob gasped in astonishment. "I'll fix you for this insolence," he said with a fine return to his old pompous self.

"Insolence, ye dirty fakir ye!" exclaimed "914," his Irish dander getting up. "An' ye'll fix me! I've heard that as soon as a naygur in this country learns English he gets cheeky, an' I belave it now."

By this time the constable had the door open, and producing a pair of steel handcuffs from his pocket, rushed at the prisoner as though he were going to take a fall out of him in the Greco-Roman style. The new constable wasn't an adept at putting on the bracelets, but he had the strength of a bull, and soon Eden-Powell was securely shackled and considerably shaken up.

"I'll discharge you from the force for this," he said pantingly as the constable with no gentle hand dragged him along toward the *gharry*.

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“ Oh, yes,” replied “ 914 ” derisively, “ you’ll do all that, an’ sack the viceroy, too, perhaps, ye English-spakin’ beggar of a native. Come, get in here, me Circassian beauty,” he added, prodding the nabob in the ribs. “ An’ it’ll be better form for you to be talkin’ yer own native *baht* than gallivantin’ with broken English.”

Eden-Powell was horror-struck. He would rather die than that all this should get out. He felt like exasperating the Irishman until the latter murdered him. Once or twice on the long drive to Calcutta he tried to enter into conversation with his guardian, but the latter, sitting bolt upright, ordered him to shut his bazoo, or talk to the native driver in his own language.

“ It drives me fair mad,” he said, “ to hear you naygurs talkin’ English. It was the likes of you that murdered all the women an’ children in the ‘ black hole.’ ”

When the nabob tried to remonstrate, “ 914 ” jabbed him in the ribs again with the end of his baton and told him to hold his whisht. Baboo Dey followed behind in another *gharry*.

Lord Roma had ordered that the fakir be brought straight to Government House, for he had become deeply interested in the affair, and wanted to see just why the natives had pitched upon this man as a representative devil.

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In under the pink-yellow stucco gate, lion-topped, "914" passed with his prisoner, and up the steps that led to the imposing guardian in crimson and yellow who held possession of Government House door; "914" stated his orders; the crimson-gold native disappeared, returned, and said, "Lord Sec'tary Sahib sends salams."

They passed in, Chunder Dey with them, and, after a wait of twenty minutes in a hall, were ushered into the presence of the viceroy.

Eden-Powell started impetuously forward when he saw the viceroy and Lord Dick, the secretary, sitting there. The powerful hand of "914" brought him back with a jerk that nearly dislocated his neck. "Kape still, ye h'athen," he hissed in his ear. "Salam the Lord Sahib."

Chunder Dey salamed obsequiously and addressed the viceroy. "Your Excellency, this is the maker of all evil, *Sheitan*."

"Bring him closer," replied the viceroy.

It was like a nightmare to Eden-Powell. If he gave his name or were recognized the farcical absurdity of the thing would be sufficient to cost him his place, he felt sure. If he didn't he might be sent to jail as a troublesome fakir. It was a terrible situation; as bad as a mutiny.

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"Does he understand English?" asked the viceroy.

"Yes, your Excellency," replied Eden-Powell.

The viceroy gave a slight start at the sound of the voice. It was most assuredly very Englishlike. Powell saw the keen gray eyes fixed upon him with a peculiar intensity of expression. "Your Excellency, this is all a mistake—" began Powell, when "914" interrupted him. "Kape still, ye scut! Answer when ye're spoken to, and kape yer tongue atune yer teeth."

"What are you saying, officer?" queried the viceroy, not hearing plainly.

"He's like a parrot with his English, your Excellency," replied the constable, saluting.

"What's your name?" the viceroy asked.

"I can't give it, your Excellency," replied Eden-Powell hesitatingly.

As he spoke the gray eyes again flashed upon Powell like the rays of a fluorescent lamp. Eden-Powell started—surely the right vice-regal eye had closed in a subdued wink. He had never heard of a viceroy winking; it seemed incompatible with the awful dignity of the office, but that right lid had most certainly drooped. Then Lord Roma spoke again. "Well, never mind your name; we'll get that

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later. You speak English well; where did you learn that?"

"At Harrow-on-the-Hill—I mean over in England, your Excellency."

Again the upper lid of the vice-regal eye stumbled and fell down, completely curtaining the steel-gray of the eye. There could be no doubt about it this time; Eden-Powell knew a wink when he saw it—that is, when he saw it the second time. What it meant he didn't know, but a wink always telegraphs the information, "Go slow."

The viceroy turned to Baboo Chunder Dey. "What makes you think this is *Sheitan*?" he asked.

From the mass of voluble information the baboo poured out he gleaned that it was chiefly the personal appearance of the fakir that inspired the baboo with his belief. Also Sunda had declared that he had reincarnated himself several times in his presence.

"I don't blame the baboo," hazarded Lord Dick; "this chap certainly looks more like the devil than anything I ever saw."

"He's a bad one, your lordship," chipped in "914." "He puts on as much stoile as an evictin' landlord."

Now Lord Dick was an Irish landlord him-

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self, and a ripple of laughter passed through the soul of the viceroy at this shot of the constable's. But "914" was oblivious to that; he was possessed with the desire to get much punishment for the cheeky fakir.

"I think," said the viceroy, speaking to the baboo, "that you are quite right in your surmise, and are quite deserving of that appointment because of your services to the state over this matter. You will see that the baboo receives a clerkship in the revenue department," he said, turning to Lord Dick, "as reward for capturing the devil. You may go, baboo."

Chunder Dey salamed his thanks, and walked out on soft, springy air. His feet smote heavily on the polished floors, but he knew it not—he felt that he was swimming.

Eden-Powell listened in blank amazement, and was about to remonstrate when the hard, polished end of the baton passed persuasively across three ribs of his right side. That and the memory of those two winks induced him to keep his mouth closed.

When the baboo had gone the viceroy addressed "C 914." "I think, officer, that this fakir is probably quite harmless; not at all the Evil One the baboo would have us believe. You may leave him there in that room on the right.

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I will have the case looked into by the proper people. You can take the—ah—the—ah—handcuffs off his wrists; then you may report to your inspector that you have left him in my charge.”

“C 914” placed Powell in the room indicated, took off the bracelets, gave the prisoner a frightful scowl, saluted, and marched solemnly out.

Then Lord Roma stepped into the room in which had been placed the fakir, closed the door deliberately and said: “Well, Mr. Eden-Powell.”

The nabob’s knees collapsed, and he said imploringly: “You know, then?”

“Ah! I was not mistaken, then,” interrupted the viceroy blandly. “I thought I recognized your voice when you first spoke. May I ask why an officer of her Majesty’s service, occupying the position Mr. Eden-Powell did, appears before me in this plight, charged by a baboo with being *Sheitan*?”

It was terribly humiliating. Eden-Powell told his Excellency the whole truth.

Later on the information went forth that the victim of Chunder Dey’s campaign, the deranged fakir, had been sent off to his own country.

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When people saw Eden-Powell in his office again they learned that he had not been drowned at all, but only in the General Hospital for two weeks on sick leave.

Sunda still believes that he carried the Evil One, and Chunder Dey that he captured him, for did he not get his appointment because of that?

Eden-Powell believes no more in putting down young mutinies, single-handed, in a mastic-applied disguise.

The whole thing showed that the viceroy had a good heart and much sense. He had saved the nabob's dignity with a wink.

(1)

THE END

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